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The chapters of this book will therefore treat only of music for piano, stringed, and wind instruments used variously in combination, and deal more especially with the methods of writing employed in works cast in sonata form. The author makes no attempt to provide an abstract treatise on the development of this special branch of art, nor does he seek to trace the historical progress of Chamber Music to its present high place as the most intellectual and the most fully perfected department of musical composition. Nevertheless, the student is recommended very strongly to approach the subject to a certain extent from this standpoint. The history of the early beginnings of instrumental music has a very considerable bearing upon the Chamber Music of the present age. Only those whose knowledge of the subject is very slight will need to be told that modern instrumental music arose in the first instance from a desire to support and assist voices in the performance of madrigals, and only by slow degrees attained to the dignity of an independent existence. The earliest instrumental compositions, therefore, differed little in form or treatment from the vocal works of the age in which they arose. The transition from this, through the period during which composers delighted in the construction of dance-measures, to the invention of the definite and important characteristics known as "Sonata Form," may be studied from any dictionary or history of music, and it is not the author's intention in the present work to cover a ground which has been trodden again and again in many excellent and valuable books. Few writers, however, have singled out Chamber Music for a separate survey, and the information given under that heading in Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is unfortunately brief and inexhaustive. Fuller particulars may be gained from a discursive, but bright and entertaining volume called *The Story of Chamber Music*, by Nicholas Kilburn (The Walter Scott Publishing Co., 1904), which, while making no attempt at historical completeness or technical scholarship, sets forth an interesting series of examples in music type accompanied by running commentaries upon the characteristic styles of the composers quoted, ranging from Philip Emanuel Bach

and William Shield to Bruckner and the modern Russian School.

The important aspect of Form and its evolution, and other technical points, receive more attention in some extremely lucid lectures on "The Development of Chamber Music" delivered at South Place Institute by Mr. Richard H. Walthew, and published in a small sixpenny book by Messrs. Boosey & Co. There is also a chapter on Chamber Music to be found, most unexpectedly, in the second volume of the late Professor Prout's valuable work *The Orchestra*, which deals briefly but ably with some of the main problems to be encountered by the student, but does not attempt any detailed teaching.

To the last three sources the writer of the present volume is gratefully indebted for some valuable suggestions in many of his lines of thought.

The intended function of this book is, however, totally different. It is the author's chief aim to provide for the student who essays to embark upon the composition of Chamber Music a handbook which may be useful in the same way that a primer or treatise on instrumentation may be helpful to a beginner desiring to compose orchestral music. The art of writing music for restricted combinations is so separate from the art of treating large masses of instruments that it is surprising that, whereas several admirable textbooks on orchestration exist, not a single volume has been devoted to the special exposition of the principles underlying the composition of true Chamber Music;—more especially surprising as the writing of such music is by no means neglected by modern composers and cannot in any sense be regarded either as a dead art or a decaying industry.

While it is necessary, with great emphasis, to impress upon the student that it is impossible to teach the special art of writing concerted Chamber Music from a book—quite as impossible as it is to teach creative composition in any form or in any of its branches in such a way—it may yet be surmised that in this art, as in all others, the actual experience of a composer may have led to discoveries which prompt

certain generalisations likely to prove helpful to those on the threshold of study.

There are indeed so many errors into which a novice may easily fall unless forewarned, so many small technicalities which may not at once be self-evident, so many wrong or ineffective ways of writing for particular instruments, or of combining and balancing their separate tones, that if this book can do no more it will justify its existence should it serve to save the student, by a word in season, from some of the more prevalent faults and miscalculations committed by the average learner. What composer has not gone through the bitter experience of hearing, at a trial performance of some early attempt at ensemble-writing, how many of his carefully designed effects miss fire, and how often the clearness, richness, sonority, or brilliance which he has intended to impart to his music fails to make itself felt in actual performance! There are some things that experience alone can teach, and as different temperaments have their own separate difficulties to conquer, it is only possible, in a small textbook for general use, to anticipate the most prevalent and the most obviously disastrous faults. An earnest student will admit that, in the long run, he has learnt more from his failures than his successes,—that it is often only through doing a thing wrongly that a sense of what is practically and artistically right is instilled into his consciousness.

Nowadays nearly all the Chamber Music of the great composers may be purchased very cheaply in neat miniature scores. A few shillings will provide the student with quite a library of the best ensemble works, and there is no surer or more interesting way of learning to compose than by delving deeply into acknowledged masterpieces, noting with care the methods adopted, and endeavouring to obtain similar effects by similar means. The composer with original thoughts will soon cease to be merely imitative. It is reported that Schumann, before embarking upon his first string quartet, shut himself up for many days with the scores of Beethoven's quartets; and yet Schumann, at that period, was already a composer with a well-developed and distinctive style of his own. Nor can we believe that he lost one jot of his personal identity in the

process of assimilation, indeed it may be conjectured that he learnt to be more self-reliant from a study of works in which independence of thought and clear forcefulness of utterance are so radiantly exemplified. Without subscribing to Emerson's famous aphorism, "the greatest genius is the most indebted man," we may yet be well assured that it is only the small man who scorns to be indebted. If a composer's development—and in a larger sense the development of successive generations—is to progress upon sound and sane lines, it must hold constant converse with the master utterances that have gone before. While we recognise that there is a necessity for the continual overthrowing of customs which have become staled into conventions, and that it is possible to explore profitably even the regions which have been deliberately rejected and regarded as barren and ugly by our great predecessors, there can be no element of pedantry in recognising that the already proven wisdom and fertility of a previous generation should be made the basis of our own work, or (to vary the metaphor) become a starting-ground from which our flights of fancy may make a safe and steady ascent.

It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to point out that a considerable knowledge of the ordinary technicalities of music is presupposed on the part of those who would seek to profit by the counsels, comments, and examples which are given in this book.

At the same time the average musical amateur will not, it is hoped, be debarred from gathering information, and with this in view no great insistence has been laid upon merely technical points. It is presumed, however, that the student in search of practical guidance in these pages has already acquired an adequate knowledge of Harmony and Counterpoint, and that he is conversant with the ordinary laws and principles which govern the practice of writing for at least four independent parts. It is also expected that he has acquaintance with all the clefs in general use, and that he has acquired, or will proceed to acquire from other sources, a knowledge of the compass, tuning, and tonal qualities of the instruments he is likely to employ, and the power to transpose mentally

and to read from score with some facility. No attempt will be made to explain these matters.

A sound practical knowledge of some stringed instrument is, of course, of immense value to the composer of Chamber Music, but many notable creative musicians have been unable to perform, and it is quite possible to conceive suitable and effective writing for instruments upon which one has not the power to play even so much as a scale. If the composer has some instinctive feeling for tone-colour, and his powers of observation are constantly employed, he will quickly learn to recognise what is suitable to the particular genius of each instrument. A merely elementary equipment as a player is not generally of great value, for, on the accepted principle that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, if the grasp of the technicalities of an instrument be very slight indeed, it may even hamper the composer rather than aid him, by rendering him unduly reticent and timid, and unwilling to embark upon enterprising passages which would be quite easy and effective in the hands of an accomplished performer.

It will be found that the first place in this volume is given to the treatment of the quartet of stringed instruments, and that more space is given to this subject than to any other branch of Chamber Music. Not only is the String Quartet the most perfect and the most important combination with which we have to deal, it is also the foundation upon which the composer can build up many other schemes of distribution.

It requires more skill to drive a tandem than a four-in-hand, and, similarly, a string trio, with its many restrictions and limitations, is far more difficult to accomplish than a quartet, and will be better attempted after some mastery has been obtained in writing for four instruments.

A quintet for strings and piano can scarcely be successfully negotiated by the novice who has not first struggled with the difficulties of writing for strings alone.

The addition of wind instruments will be a comparatively easy accomplishment when once the balance and strength of the string force is correctly gauged, but to begin one's experience of Chamber writing with the larger mixed combinations,

such as septets or octets, would be to court disaster. The piano and wind instruments will be dealt with in their turn, but the strings come first and deserve the largest share of attention and study.

The author has endeavoured to make a special feature of the illustrations in music type, from which he believes much help may be derived. These illustrations are, however, of necessity very brief, and are chiefly intended to be supplementary to a more thorough study from complete scores. The scores of many modern works are either unobtainable or expensive, and it is hoped that students may welcome the circumstance that the more inaccessible compositions have been somewhat freely drawn upon.

In one particular it is felt that some kind of apology or explanation may be needed. The author has not hesitated to quote passages from well-known composers in order to show what is ineffective or undesirable in certain branches of writing. The quotations are given with the sole idea of helping the student, and of warning him of dangers and temptations that even distinguished writers in the past have been unable successfully to avoid. In no case are any works quoted for the purpose of belittling their composers; in several instances the faults pointed out are merely faults of technical or unsuitable distribution, most of the compositions quoted being, as wholes, notable musical conceptions for which the author has the highest admiration. In the majority of cases these faults have arisen from a desire to make the form express more than it is actually and naturally capable of expressing, and it is hoped that a quotation from an orchestrally conceived quartet, printed in close proximity to a few well-chosen bars of undoubted Chamber Music, may help the student to see better the dangers that beset him, and some of the methods by which he may contrive to avoid them.

It is the fashion at the present time to deplore what is called the decline of Chamber Music in England, especially in London, and to speak of the flourishing epoch of the Saturday and Monday "Pops" as the "palmy days" of this form of music.

It may be true that we do not to-day enjoy such a regular and comfortable succession of uniformly excellent performances, but it is also true that the Chamber Music which we do hear is generally listened to under far more favourable conditions, either in buildings more suitable in size than the old St. James's Hall, or in the private rooms of the wealthy and the cultured, where musical entertainments on the required artistic level are far more frequently given than formerly. In many ways the atmosphere of the old "Pops," with their hero-worshipping crowds of enthusiasts, was a little unreal and exotic, quite apart from the fact that the most slenderly conceived and daintily proportioned works were played upon a platform situated at one extremity of a vast building, sounding, at the other extremity, almost like etherealised gramophone records. Indeed it may be said that perfect conditions for the true enjoyment of concerted Chamber Music cannot be established without, firstly, entirely eliminating the virtuoso element, and, secondly, bringing the players into close enough touch with the audience for the sound of the strings to retain its complete brilliance and resonance, and for the most refined *nuances* to be clearly audible to all. Chamber Music is not for the crowd, and one cannot readily attune oneself to receive it if the crowd is present. It has no glamour of vivid colouring—it is in music very much what a water-colour drawing is in the realm of painting. The scheme as a whole is more subdued, and instead of the heavy, rich layers of pigment, completely hiding the rough canvas upon which they are imposed, we find a soft quiet toning, every shade of which is important and telling, laid, with an unerring hand, upon a surface the delicate texture of which is still visible, contributing its own value to the charm and reality of the whole picture, as well as receiving and absorbing the impressions which the well-guided brushes have laid upon it.

If the ideal conditions are difficult of attainment and seldom completely attained, the opportunities of hearing the best Chamber Music in London under fairly satisfactory conditions have enormously increased, and almost every provincial town of importance possesses one or more societies for the

especial cultivation of this delightful branch of art. This being so, the would-be composer of such music may be urged to seize every opportunity of hearing the best works of all periods as frequently as possible, for by attending well rehearsed and ably rendered performances, with, wherever possible, the scores of the works to be played in his hand, he may learn more than any book can possibly claim to teach. He will find many opportunities of hearing such music under good conditions, and, even if some superior persons declare to him that Chamber Music "is not what it used to be," he may recall with a smile the classical retort of one of Mr. Punch's young men, who, on hearing his favourite journal criticised in similar fashion, replied, "It never was!"

With evidences on every hand of a healthy and genuine interest in listening to such music, it is natural that our own composers should continue to exercise their skill in the composition of ensemble works of an intimate character. It may be doubted if any country in Europe could furnish a more imposing array of earnest and ardent young musicians than is to be found in England at the present time, and it is extremely gratifying to note that the majority of these men are devoting a large part of their time to the composition of Chamber Music. It is even more gratifying to observe that this music is, as a whole, true to the best traditions of its kind, and, while not lacking in the natural impatience of youth, exhibits few leanings towards sensationalism. Indeed, it has contrived to keep itself singularly pure, and untainted with that turgid pessimism which has rendered unwholesome so much recent orchestral music, both British and foreign.

In these days when no art and no separate branch of it is safe from the meddlesome interference of ever-ready enthusiasts, whose bookish ambitions must somehow be gratified, it is customary to offer some formal and courteous words of apology or explanation before setting seriously to grapple with the problems to be faced. The present author, not less modest he hopes than others who have meddled before him, would only enter one little plea—a plea for indulgence. He has endeavoured to grapple with a large subject which has hitherto

been neglected by the writer of educational books. He has striven in so doing to avoid pedantry, and the intrusion of narrow-minded prejudices. He has tried, wherever possible, not to lay down the law, or to don the professorial cap and gown, or to speak as from a seat of authority. It is for all serious defections in pursuit of this almost unattainable achievement that he craves the indulgence of his readers, as he offers for their consideration the first published treatise on the art and practice of Chamber Music.

CHAPTER II.

THE STRING QUARTET.

I.

Some general principles, as exemplified in the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

If the control of balance and tone-colour is a difficult matter in orchestration, it is still more difficult in the writing of chamber music. The slighter the structure, the more easily it is disturbed or upset; the more delicate the general tone, the more disastrously is it overbalanced and spoiled by a misplaced or too vivid splash of colour. The composer of Chamber Music must, above all things, be earnest and thoughtful. He who would be successful in such a sphere must possess a strong feeling for the niceties of form, and cultivate a sense for the highest refinements of detail. Rough-and-ready methods, carelessness, or superficiality are alike fatal. The medium is also utterly unsuitable for the display of emotional excesses, the best Chamber Music always having a markedly intellectual side, and however vigorous and wild it may be in conception the actual presentation of the ideas must be tempered by a regard for the delicate proportions of the machinery employed to present them.

The foregoing remarks, applicable to Chamber Music in general, are more especially to be borne in mind with regard to the composition of concerted works for strings alone, where the clarity and transparency of the medium are most marked, and the tone-quality is most uniform and subdued. Of such works that which is of the greatest importance, and requires

the highest perfection of balance, is undoubtedly the String Quartet.

The String Quartet is always written for two violins, a viola, and a violoncello, and as these instruments are in themselves the most generally employed in Chamber Music, and in this particular combination the most thoroughly and successfully exploited, no apology is needed for giving to the String Quartet the foremost place and the most extensive survey in the present volume.

In the very brief article upon quartets in the new edition of Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the statement is vouchsafed that "the origin of the Quartet was the invention of four-part harmony." The most that can be inferred from this singular generalisation, which is evidently intended to apply to instrumental music only, is that until the quartet became an actual and established mode of expression it was more customary for composers to write their Chamber Music either for *three* stringed or wind instruments, or for combinations in which a keyboard instrument provided the harmony to melodic solo parts. There are, of course, isolated examples of quartets of stringed instruments being employed by composers at very early periods of musical history—Allegri, for instance, who died in 1652, composed a quartet for two violins, viola, and basso di viola.

Speaking broadly, however, the quartet, as we know it, may be said to have been the invention of Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), who certainly did not invent four-part harmony, but who probably, in the first instance, regarded the combination of four well-balanced stringed instruments as the most suitable means of adapting or reducing a work of symphonic proportions for Chamber use. The strings in the orchestra had for some time previously been arranged in four parts, the violins being divided, to correspond with the soprano and alto voices, the violas taking the tenor part,[1] and the violoncellos (strengthened by the

[1] In many early scores the viola doubles the 'cello part; even in the first symphony of Beethoven it has very little independence. The reason for this was that the viola was so little cultivated that it was often impossible to obtain skilful players in sufficient numbers to maintain an independent part.

double-basses at the octave below) the bass part. Thus the early quartets of Haydn are a kind of adaptation of orchestral writing for strings, and often mere skeletons in design, giving little promise of the richly detailed independent form which was to follow. In most instances the principal interest lay entirely in the first violin part, the other instruments providing little more than mere accompaniment. The emancipation from this idea was, however, very rapid, and before long it became quite evident that the true constructive principle to be aimed at in this branch of writing was the equal interest and importance of each part; and although the development of this idea was not perhaps fully carried out until Beethoven's time, Haydn (in his later quartets), and more especially Mozart, gave that boldness and freedom to the lower instruments which, in the beginning, had only been considered suitable for the first violin. There have been, it is true, some defections from this unquestionably sound principle. Quartets such as those of Spohr, in which the first violin was treated as a solo instrument, enjoyed a very wide popularity in their day, but the fact that they suffered the penalty of an early death is enough in itself to prove that this re-adoption of earlier methods represented a false step. If we hear to-day (and it is very unlikely that we will) a quartet in which three of the parts are continuously subordinate to the soloist, we feel instinctively that this is bad Chamber Music, however excellent or beautiful the effect obtained may be.

We may consider it indispensable, then, that each instrument which forms the quartet must have interesting and important passages to perform. But the idea must be carried further than this before the full meaning of independence can be understood. The demand for the separate interest of each part is in itself a recognition of the individual sensitiveness and interpretative powers of the several performers who constitute the quartet. A quartet of strings is not a machine, like a keyboard instrument. It presents an even less mechanical aspect than an orchestra, which is, to some extent, played upon by the conductor. It is, in truth, a combination of four separate personalities, each of whom, while

working for the unity of the whole effect, has, in a sense, a separate character and individuality as a player. And—what is more important still from the composer's standpoint—the idea of independence implies a recognition of the special genius and characteristics of each kind of instrument employed.

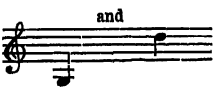
The composer will quickly recognise the essential qualities of the violin, its supreme capabilities of pure expressiveness, its elasticity and agility, the brilliance and bright quality of the high notes on the E string, and the richness, depth, and power of which the G string is capable. It has more versatility, and can command a more extensive range of expression than any other stringed instrument.

With the viola there is a certain uniform richness throughout its entire compass, a tone-quality in its higher notes which is quite different from that of the violin, whilst, though (in an artist's hands) it is capable of being almost as agile as its smaller sister, it is, at all events, less generally suited to the execution of light or dainty passages. The viola has a sound box which is very flat in proportion to its size, and this sometimes gives to the tones it produces a slightly nasal quality. Many attempts have been made to rectify this, but none have been really successful. The problem is that the viola must not be too large to be held in the same position as the violin, and cannot be really large enough to give, at the pitch to which it is tuned, a precisely similar quality of tone.

Owing to the greater difference in size, and consequent truer proportion in regard to pitch, the tone of the violoncello is more similar in quality to the violin than that of the viola—and it is sometimes necessary to bear this fact in view when writing a string quartet.

The violoncello, indeed, has its own special character apart from its difference in pitch. Its notes resemble, in some respects, the quality of a baritone voice, and it is especially suitable for lyrical passages. The higher notes on the A string are very telling, but naturally in quartet writing the middle and lower registers will be more frequently used. The *pizzicato* has a full pithy tone which gives good support to the other instruments, and is more generally effective for

frequent use than the *pizzicato* of the violin or viola. The violoncello has the power of agile movement too, but extremely rapid passages on the lower strings are often not very effective or clear, and care should be taken not to write melodic phrases on the A string too constantly or insistently, as the tone is apt, by its very sweetness and richness, to pall and become cloying.

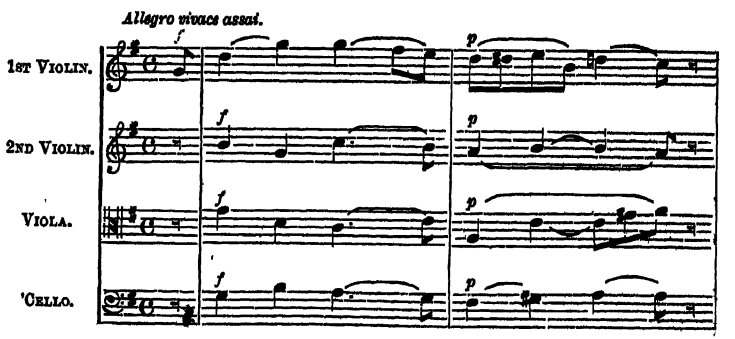
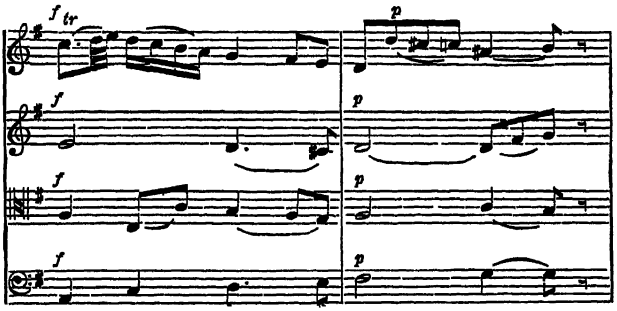
It is impossible to suggest in a few words the special capabilities of these three different members of the same harmonious family; much more information on this point can be gathered from the study of the musical examples printed later in this book, from the perusal of scores, and especially from the hearing of quartet playing. But it is highly important that the student should realise at the very outset that this difference in tone-quality, though slight in comparison with the difference in timbre of various wind instruments, may be accentuated and made an extremely important factor. A melody lying between

for instance, might be played by violin, viola, or violoncello equally readily, and it is necessary for the composer to obtain an accurate mental impression of the effect of its performance, as a solo, in each of these three different ways.

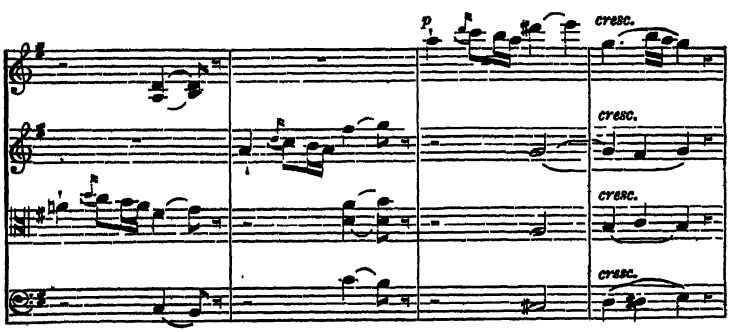
This may seem to some an elementary and almost too self-evident point to press home, but the more alike in tone-colour the instruments which a composer combines may be, the greater is the danger of his failing to recognise the differences that do exist. Many an otherwise estimable string quartet is dull in colouring from the fact that the instruments are treated throughout in too uniform a way. There is no denying that the *similarity* of quality gives us one of the finest virtues possessed by this combination of instruments—the possibility of preserving a nearly perfect uniformity of tone. It is a similarity which enables a composer to pass from instrument to instrument with an almost imperceptible change of colour if

he so desires, using the quartet somewhat as a single instrument and spreading his passages throughout the entire compass, from the lowest 'cello notes to the highest tones of the violin. It enables him also to produce strongly forcible unison passages of one decided hue, and the most beautiful chord effects in perfectly balanced harmonies with unity and smoothness of tone. At the same time there are places where a recognition of the separate genius and colour capacity of each instrument will be of great value to the composer, and he should rarely lose sight of these possibilities which are so precious to him when he seeks for variety of interest, and so helpful when, in lyrical vein, he has 'songs-without-words' to sing.

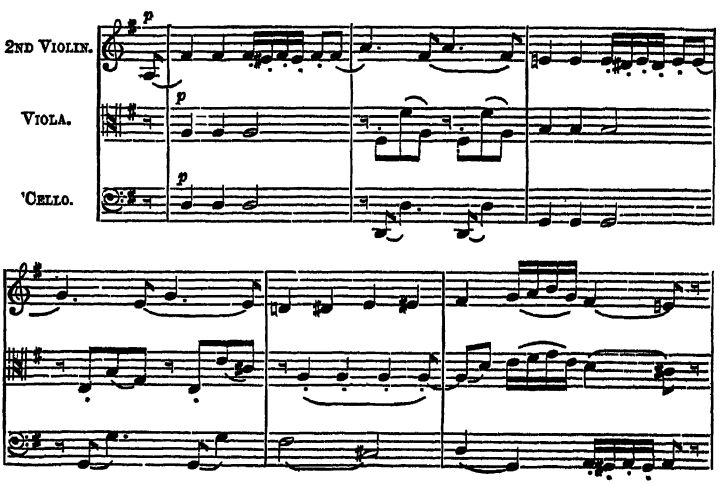
It is not needful further to emphasise these two points. The student will doubtless quickly recognise that much of the charm of the string quartet is to be found in the strong contrasts obtainable by the juxtaposition of passages depending for their effect upon unity of tone, and those depending upon the use of the separate instruments as individual solo voices.

It would seem hardly necessary to quote passages in which the instruments are distributed easily and smoothly in four parts, but in such an instance as the following,—the opening of Mozart's Quartet in G major, No. 1, dedicated to Haydn,—in similar strain to which numerous other examples might be cited, the effect of unity, simplicity, and perfect balance is better obtainable by a quartet of strings than in other way.

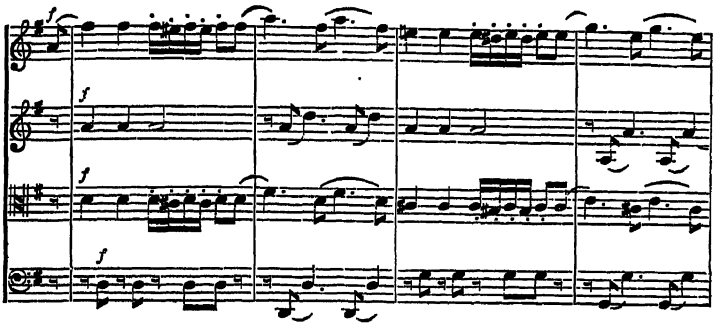
EX. 1.

Such a theme so treated is essentially quartet music. On a keyboard instrument half its value would be lost through the impossibility to give to it the gracious smoothness of phrasing that it demands—on an orchestra its delicate meaning and intimacy of feeling would be quite unobtainable. Moreover, the immediate continuation of the above extract gives us a taste of a different method, the four bars which follow those quoted being equally instructive from another point of view.

EX. 2.

Here the viola has a graceful phrase, which is echoed by the second violin—beginning on the same notes but not sounding the same owing to the difference of colouring—and then the entry of the first violin in the higher octave, and the rounding off of the phrase with four perfectly balanced chords in the three lower instruments. show us a specially characteristic solo

violin passage, and an admirably simple method of enhancing the beauty of its contour. It would be hard to find anywhere eight bars of a quartet which so admirably typify in a short space the best possible kind of writing for the instruments. The bars which immediately ensue are also highly interesting as exemplifying that natural and unforced kind of contrapuntal writing which is more effectively displayed in a quartet than through any other medium. At the twenty-fifth bar the second subject is reached. The distribution of the instruments here is likewise instructive. The second violin has at the beginning the leading theme, the first violin resting for six bars:—

EX. 3.

The management of the lower parts here affords an excellent example of the right way of doing a very simple thing—the beautiful swinging rhythm of the melody being made more beautiful by the separate pulsation of the viola and 'cello parts, which, without predominating, do not merely accompany but have an interest of their own.

The arrangement of the four instruments at the re-entry of the first violin to continue the strain is also well deserving of close study:—

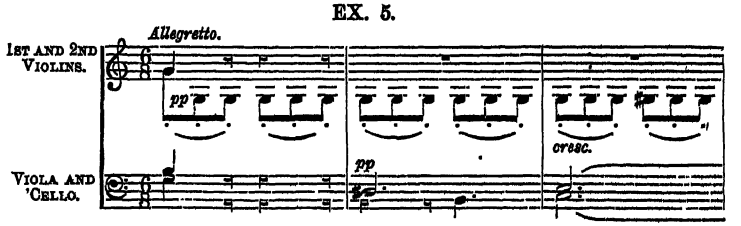
EX. 4.

The student should note the effect of the viola tone accentuating the melody in the tenth below, the second violin, having had its say, becoming subservient again and continuing with a share of the fanciful phrases that were allotted previously to the viola and 'cello.

The whole of this charming and most perfectly devised quartet will amply repay study. As in Orchestration, so also in Chamber Music, a student may gather at starting a vaster store of helpful information upon technical points from the perusal of a Mozart score than from any other source. In Mozart's quartets may be seen the most valuable and effective devices clearly set forth in a small space, with little elaboration of detail and no harmonic complexity to obscure the point. And one need certainly never be ashamed of being indebted to Mozart—when almost every composer of great eminence from Beethoven to Tschaïkowsky and Strauss has solemnly confessed, in work or word, a similar indebtedness! To attempt to imitate Mozart's style nowadays by constructing square and clear-cut melodic periods is, of course, neither desirable nor likely to lead to good results, but no better model could be found in the matter of balance and "scoring" (if the word may be permitted) however modern and advanced the student's ideas may be. Of the ten quartets by Mozart, published in the convenient Payne's Miniature Scores (which are obtainable at a few pence apiece from Messrs. Donajowski), every student should make himself thoroughly familiar with at least five—No. 1 in G (here quoted), No. 8 in C (with its singularly

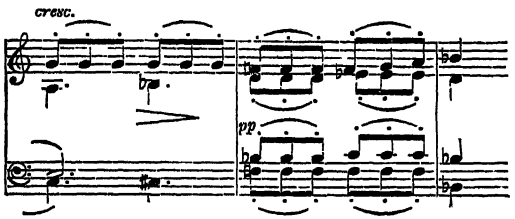
modern-toned opening Adagio, over which many purists have solemnly shaken their heads), No. 24 in D (more richly elaborated and more ambitious in polyphonic device than most of the works of that period), No. 34 in B flat (a charming and most characteristic work), and No. 35 in A (remarkable for the wonderfully wrought variations in the Andante, and the contrapuntal freedom of the Finale).[1]

It is more difficult to make a definite selection from the quartets of Haydn, of which seventy-seven are published by the same firm, but nothing can justify the composition student in treating them with the neglect which falls to their lot at the hands of concert-givers. Most of his earlier quartets are, though graceful and charming, of slender interest from the constructive aspect, and rather thin in tone. But it should not be forgotten that although Haydn, in his early days, wrote works which gave Mozart abundantly suggestive material upon which to build, in his later years he, in his turn, learnt much from Mozart, whom he long outlived; and a few of Haydn's quartet movements are so advanced in character that they may almost be regarded as connecting links between Mozart and Beethoven. If we take only one instance of an isolated outstanding passage, which occurs in the Quartet in G, Op. 54, No. 1—a work which is entirely happy and comfortable, and not, in its main outlines, in any way different from others of its period—we shall see evidences of this advancement, and more than a suggestion of that indulgence in the unexpected which became so remarkable a feature in the music of Beethoven's maturity. An ordinary perfect cadence in G major is reached when the following *pianissimo* passage ensues:

EX. 5.

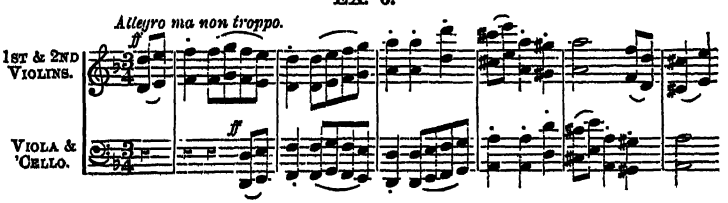


[1] The numbers here given are the list numbers of Payne's Scores.



Beethoven would doubtless have allowed the *crescendo* which begins in the third bar to have lasted till the end of the fourth bar, and made the change of key on a sudden *pianissimo* —he would also, probably, have scorned the device of immediately making an exact repetition of the whole passage, as Haydn does, leading from the key of B flat into the key of D flat. But at the same time the tendency exhibited here, and elsewhere in the later quartets, is unmistakably significant. Scarcely less striking is Haydn's forcible use of unisonic subjects and strongly defined passages in two parts. The following quotation from the Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2, is interesting for its boldness no less than for its striking theme, presented in canonical form and in a five-bar rhythm.

EX. 6.



The whole of the Minuet of this quartet (of which the above extract forms the opening bars) is distributed in this clear and decisive way, and the movement produces an excellent and stimulating effect decidedly akin to that achieved by many of the more vigorous and emphatic pages of Beethoven.

Beethoven wrote sixteen string quartets which cover a very wide range of thought and exhibit extraordinary progress of constructive development. It is customary to divide Beethoven's works into groups representing three periods, and with the quartets this division can very easily be made. In

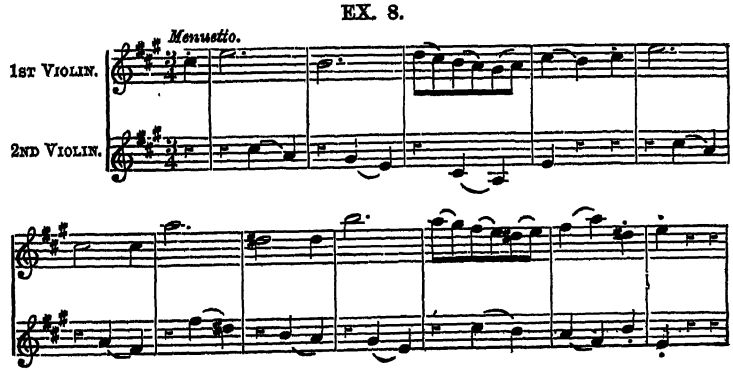
his early style he wrote six, published as Op. 18 in the year 1801; of his middle period there are four strikingly fine examples, the three dedicated to Count Rasoumowsky (Op. 59), and the work in E flat (Op. 74), which is commonly known as the "Harp Quartet"; the rugged and impressive composition in F minor (Op. 95) may be regarded as occupying an isolated position between the middle and third periods, in which latter category the last five quartets (Op. 127, 130, 131, 132, and 135) are most emphatically to be placed, indeed they are without question the most typically striking examples of that strangely elusive and rhapsodical manner for which we have no description more expressive or less clumsy than "late-Beethoven."

From the study of the quartets of Haydn and Mozart we can pass very easily and naturally to the inspection of the first six of Beethoven. Were it the function of this book to deal with the development of form, or what may be better termed the breaking away from formality in structure, much might be said regarding the treatment of thematic material in these particular works, but except in so far as such developments affected the style of writing for the strings, and encouraged experiments in novel ways of distributing the parts and strengthening the total force of tone available, the present work is not concerned with the evolution of constructive principles. Speaking broadly, it may be said that Beethoven's quartets sound fuller and more sonorous than those of his predecessors, more especially in the slow movements, in which he attempted a far greater richness of expression than had been previously considered applicable to Chamber Music. The contrasts are sharper, and the colouring more decided. His habit of playing with short and at first apparently insignificant phrases led the way to a more consistent recognition of the separate individuality of each instrument, the importance of which has already been emphasised earlier in this chapter.

In the first of the six quartets, Op. 18 (in all probability not the first to be written of that set, although published as No. 1), we find a subject to the first movement that would probably not have appealed particularly to either of Beethoven's famous predecessors.

EX. 7.

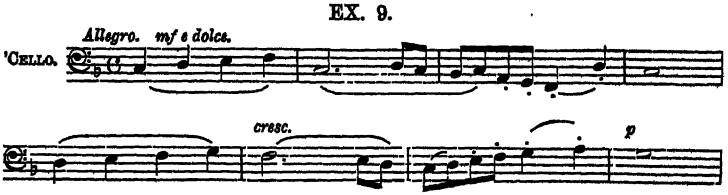
It is given forth at first with the greatest possible simplicity, in unison, by all the four strings. But before many bars are over one realises that the rhythm of the first five notes is a kind of topic of conversation; it appears, with gentle insistence, upon each instrument in turn, serving now as the fragment of an extended melody, now as a figure of accompaniment in an inner part, and now as an ornamentation of a pedal-bass which supports a cantabile melody played by the first violin. It is obvious that this method of composition is extremely well suited to the quartet combination, in which it finds its most natural exponent. The second quartet of the same set has all the grace and delicacy of Mozart, and, added to this, the same felicity of treatment of small phrases that has been noted in No. 1. In Nos. 3 and 4, except in the matter of an added richness of quality in places, there is little advance to be noted in treatment, indeed the Finale of No. 4 in C minor seems almost like a return to the comfortable merriment of the early Haydn quartets in method, with its regular subdivisions and repeats. No. 5, in A, has the real Beethoven ring in its first movement, and some interesting distributions of parts in the *Menuetto*, where the first and second violins have the initial statement of the subject all to themselves:

EX. 8.

No. 6, a bright work in B flat, has nothing remarkably novel in its treatment except for a wonderful Adagio passage (La Malinconia) which precedes the last movement, and is full of fresh suggestiveness and promise of wonderful developments.

When we come to the second period quartets, especially the three dedicated to Count Rasoumowsky, we are in a totally different world, and if the student will turn from his Mozart and Haydn scores to the perusal of Beethoven's Op. 59 he will find an astonishing change of method. In each of these three works there is the full dignity attached to a composition of symphonic proportions. The quartet seems no longer a miniature, though the medium is the same, and its limitations are never exposed, as in so many quartets by more modern composers.

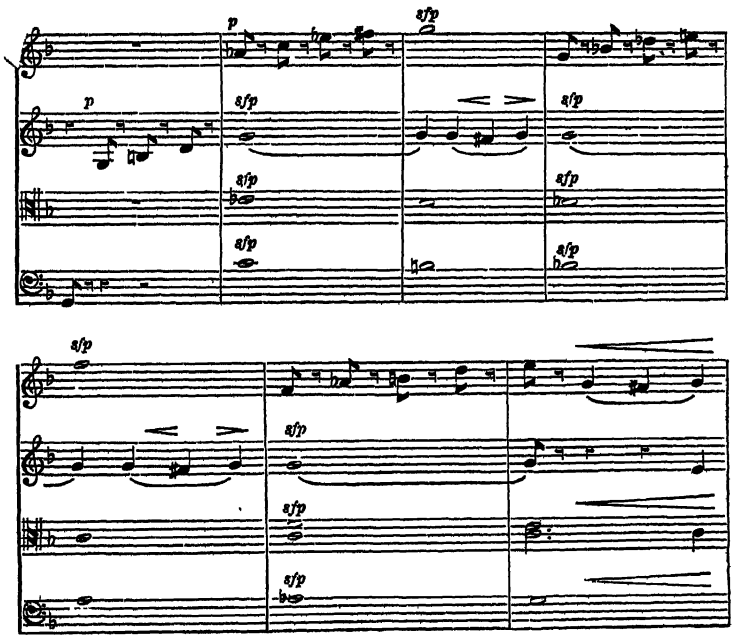
With the possible exception of Schubert, in two examples, no one but Beethoven has so completely extracted the uttermost from the four instruments, no one has so cunningly contrived, by the resources of contrast, and control over a wide range of emotional expressiveness, to give the impression of Titanic strength with such a slight and delicate machinery at his disposal. It is, of course, due to the power of the *music* more than to any actual technical distribution of parts, and yet if we study these three quartets closely we may learn a few of the secrets of Beethoven's magic.

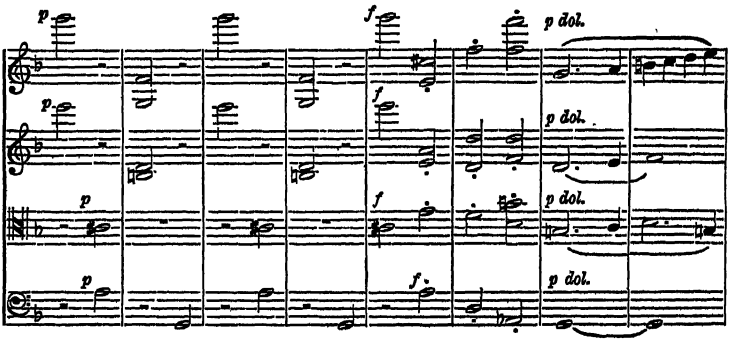
In the first of the three quartets we find an immediate instance of the symphonic dignity alluded to above. The opening Allegro is broader and grander in design, and contains subject-matter far more noble in conception than anything attempted in previously written quartet movements. There is a sense of space in the big melodic sweep of the magnificent first subject.

EX. 9.

It is built upon only two harmonies for eighteen bars, a mode of treatment greatly accentuating its pure diatonic strength. One hesitates to hold up the method employed in this accompaniment as an example for imitation. For seven bars the second violin and viola have repeated notes,

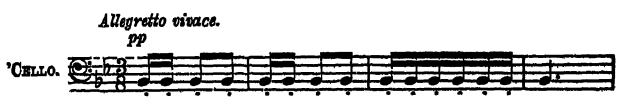
EX. 10.

and, on the entry of the first violin to continue the strain, the same method of support continues for ten bars of dominant harmony. One feels instinctively, however, that the dignity and import of every note of the melody are so great that anything more pretentious, or more shifting in its interest, in the other parts would utterly destroy the character of the music. The time for innovation and surprise comes a little later in the movement. When, just before the entry of the second subject, we come across such a remarkable passage as the following:—

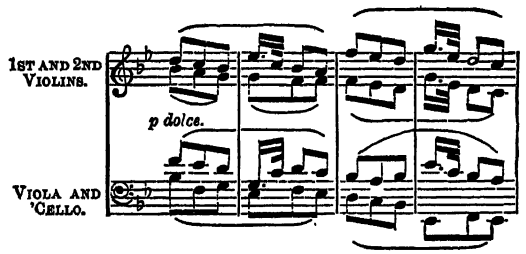
EX. 11.

we realise how completely Beethoven succeeded in remoulding the means at his disposal. As soon as his forceful personality demanded it, he was no longer content with harmonic bases of an ordinary simple kind for the expression of his ideas. Equally interesting harmonically, and by reason of the novelty of the part-distribution, is the succession of thin and full chords which occurs, in different keys, three times in the course of the Allegro.

EX. 12.

Here, indeed, is a valuable lesson in the art of obtaining colour and contrast without overstepping any bounds, or losing the sense that a quartet has for its exponents only four interpreters.

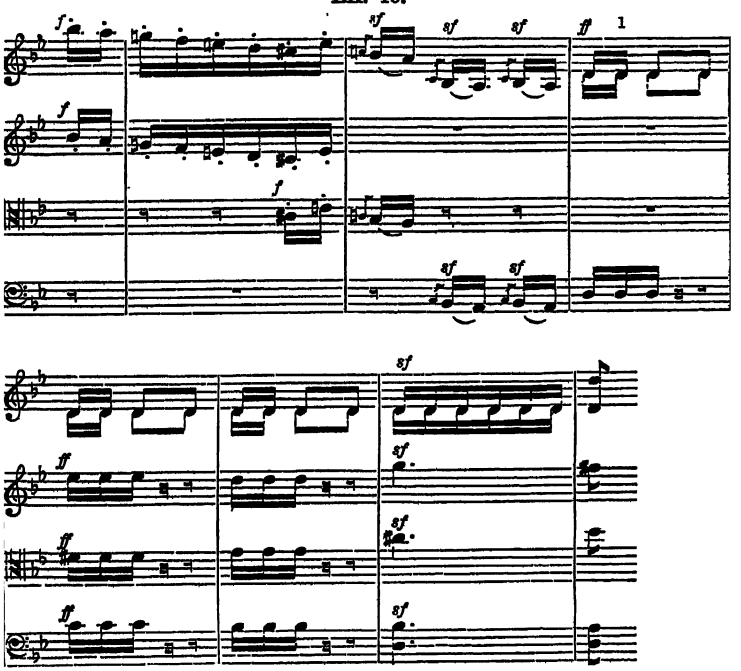
This large and deliberate first movement is succeeded by a Scherzo equally expansive and original, though in a totally different way. Beginning with a bewitchingly playful rhythm, of which much use is made throughout:—

EX. 13.

it has alternating passages of tenderness and grace:—

EX. 14.



and episodes of vivid and almost fierce rhythmical accentuation:—

EX. 15.

Most assuredly no such fantastic revelry of brusque geniality had ever been attempted before. Humour was no new quality in

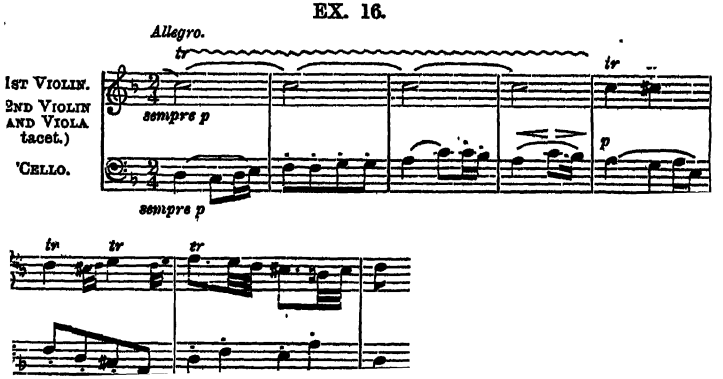
[1] Single notes with double stems in the same part (as in these four bars) indicate the use of two strings. Thus the note D is here intended to be played upon the fourth string as well as upon the open third string, a device which is useful when special emphasis is demanded.

music, it is true, but this is something more: it is veritably witty, one might almost say epigrammatic, in the sting of its brilliance!

In the Adagio molto e mesto, which forms the third movement, we have a fullness and intensity of utterance which is almost as new as the caprice of the previous section. The parts are woven together with an elaboration of figurative device and a variety of workmanship which satisfy completely the requisite that a quartet should be a work for four soloists, and not merely an effective combination of four stringed instruments. Very decoratively outlined, as an instance, is the long violin passage which leads to the trill under which the theme of the last movement makes its first appearance, without pause or preparation.

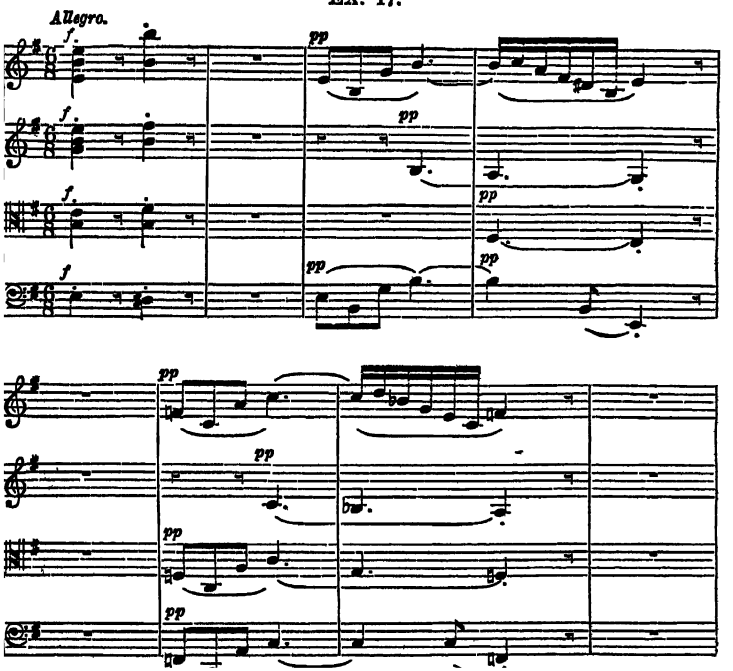
This tune, labelled *Thème Russe*, is avowedly derived from a traditional folk-melody, and it is interesting to note that this quotation and one other melody (the *Thème Russe* of the next quartet of the same opus) are the only known instances of Beethoven's use of borrowed material, except in connection with variations, in the whole catalogue of his works. They were doubtless introduced as a compliment to Count Rasoumowsky, who was at that time Russian Ambassador in the Austrian Court. The subject of this Finale, in passing through Beethoven's hands, has little left of its original Slavonic character, for what was once a slow and somewhat sombre melody in a minor key is transformed into the following brightly energetic and pointed phrase, which seems immediately to acquire all the emphatic independence of a real Beethoven idea:—

EX. 16.

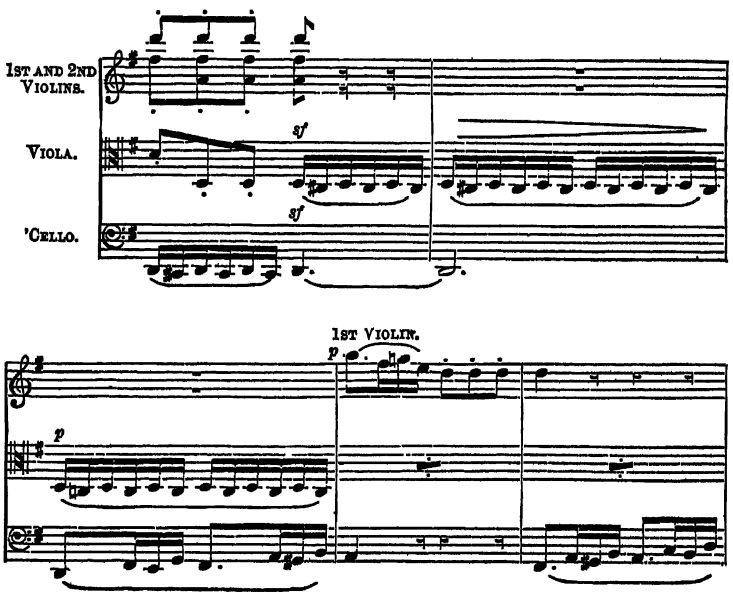


How well the vitality of this material is sustained the student must see for himself from the score—as an example of continuous unflagging energy there is nothing better in the whole of Chamber Music, each instrument having its due share in the bustling passages which hurry on with scarcely a momentary pause for breath till the last page is reached. Then, with dramatic suddenness, there comes a curious *perdendosi* passage in which the *Thème Russe* itself is played Adagio, nine bars of Presto afterwards bringing the work to a strongly vigorous conclusion.

The second of the Rasoumowsky quartets, the famous E minor, smaller in dimensions than the first, is equally fine, and even more full of original and surprising things. The opening of the first movement is portentous, suggesting suppressed passion and unrest, and compelling attention with its remarkable sequential construction.

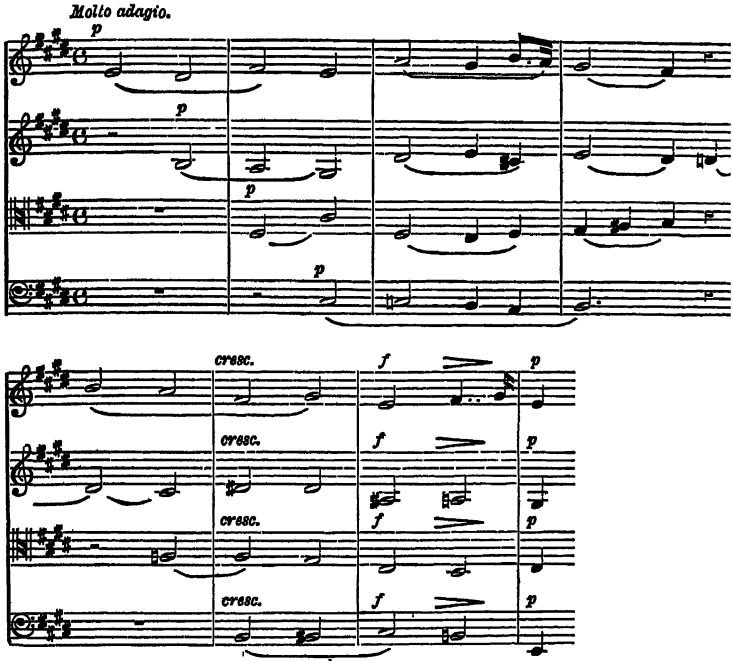
EX. 17.

We find here, also, a similar freedom in part-writing, and many passages in which the special characteristics of the instruments are strikingly exhibited. The dark hue of the C string of the viola has seldom been employed more significantly, for instance, than in the following passage, where the sinuous phrases of 'cello and violin usher in a more serene theme in G major, which brings a little relief to the strain and tension of the music.

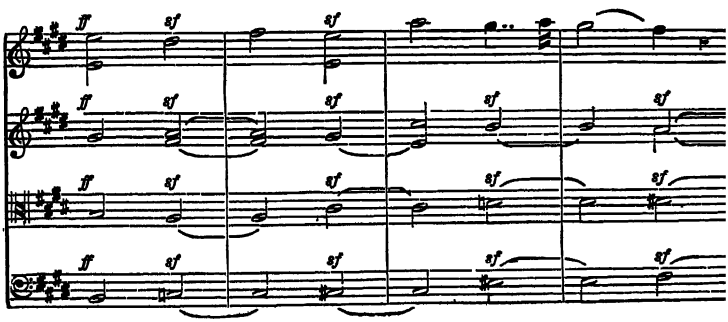
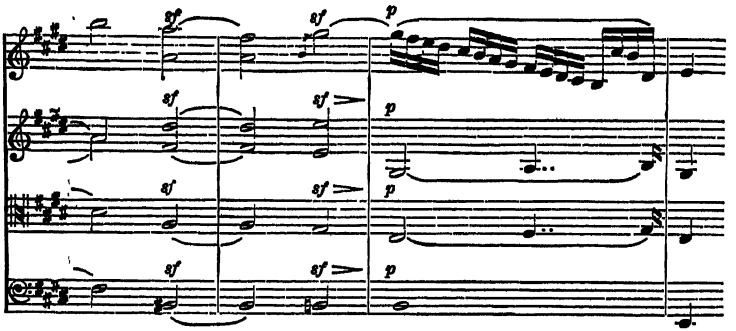
EX. 18

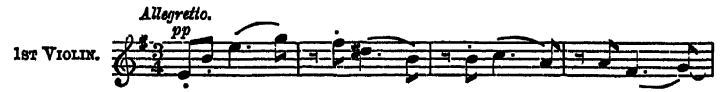


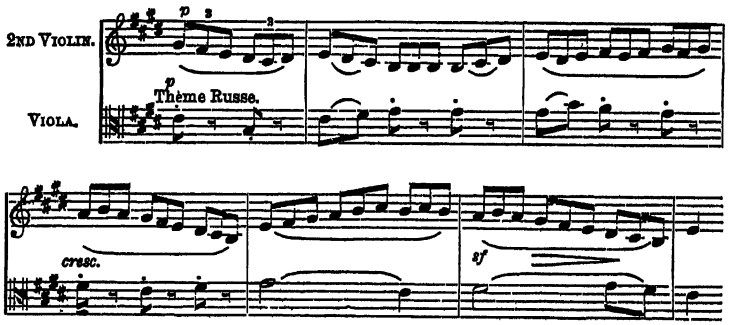
Later on considerable use is made of syncopated figures in which 3-4 time is suggested by the insistence (in the lower parts) upon the first, third and fifth quavers of each bar.

The slow movement is again rich in harmonic colour and rhythmic device. It has for its main subject a theme of great dignity and impressiveness:—

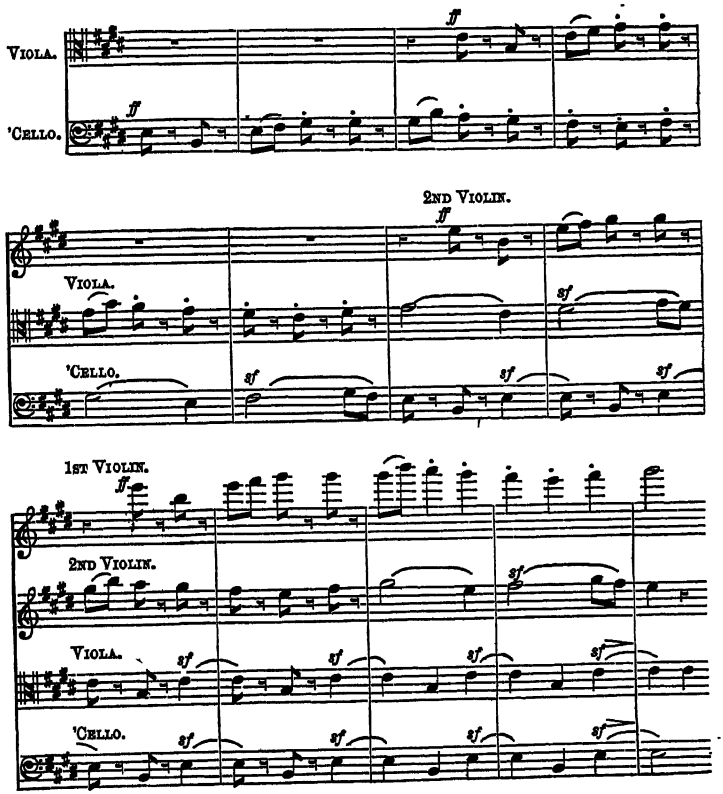
EX. 19.

Towards the close of the Adagio this theme is given with added power, the distribution of the parts being here a fine lesson in the judicious use of sustained double-notes to give strength to the texture where increased sonority is demanded.

EX. 20.

The Allegretto which follows, in its delicate yet persistent treatment of a charming rhythmic idea, is fascinatingly wistful.

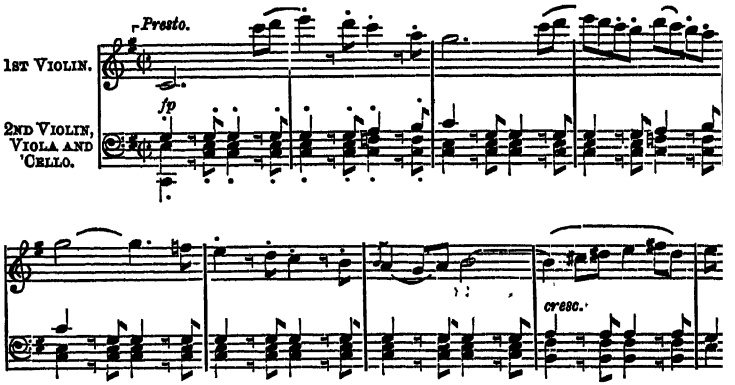
EX. 21.

It is in the middle section or "Trio" of this movement that the second *Thème Russe*, already alluded to, makes its appearance as the subject of a kind of abbreviated fugue.

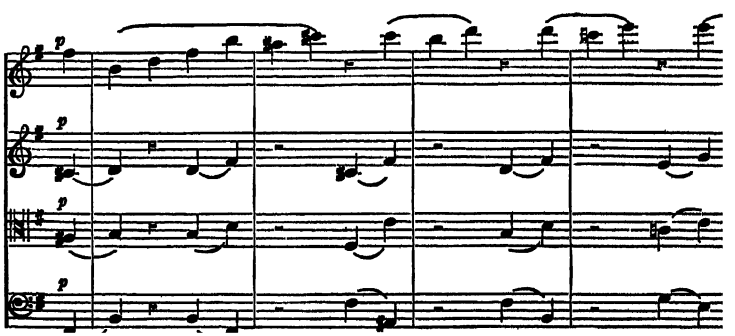
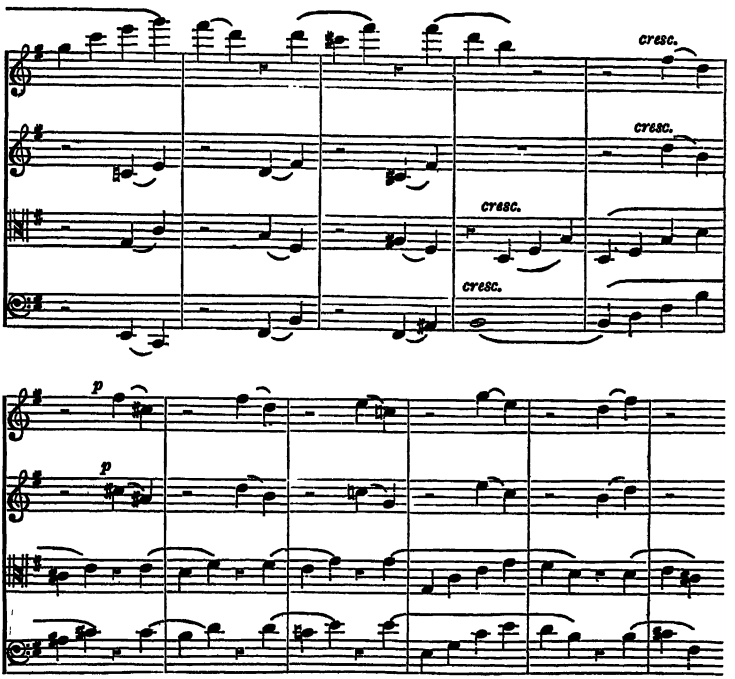
EX. 22.

The student should notice with what independence the triplet figures of the second violin cross and recross the outlines of the main melody. This triplet passage is taken up

in turn by all the other instruments, and then, to vary the device and save the scheme from a suggestion of monotony (for it keeps persistently to its regular alternation of E major and B major in subject and answer throughout), the accompanying passage becomes *staccato* quavers in place of triplets. Lastly, we have a bracing *stretto* passage, extremely bold in its disregard of notes that "hit" and clash with one another.

EX. 23.

Very emphatic, almost defiant, is the chief subject of the Finale, more in C major than E minor, but continually coming to a cadence in the latter key, as if to apologise

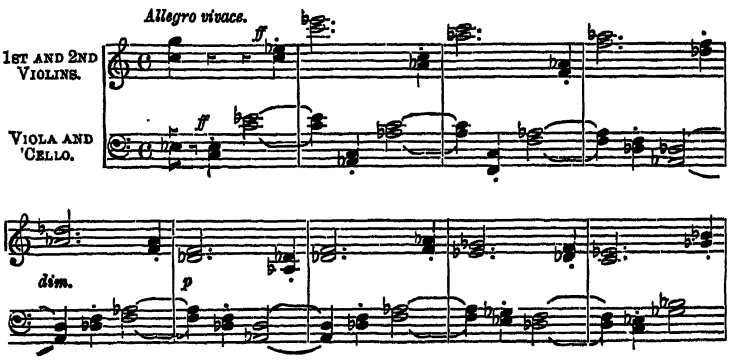
fer its arrogance, and then impudently scampering off again, as much in C major as before!

EX. 24.

The playful treatment of the three ascending notes of the subject is one of the special features of the score; they are tossed to and fro from one instrument to another, ultimately landing us each time in C major to begin the same wild theme all over again. The whole conception is astonishing in its vivacity. There is less defiance in a secondary subject which claims attention, not only for its beauty and grace, but also as an instance of a novel treatment of the instruments.

EX. 25.

The transference of the subject to the two lower instruments in thirds, whilst the first and second violins take up the accompanying phrases, gives an example of one of those specially effective devices which belong to string-quartet writing alone. It is worthy of notice that when the same theme re-occurs later in the movement, in the key of E minor, a slight difference in the distribution of the parts is used. Beethoven gives the upper part of the passage in thirds to the 'cello, the viola playing the bass, and this gives a different colouring to the melody, though in other respects the arrangement of the instruments is precisely similar.

The third Rasoumowsky quartet, in C major, less deep and less emotional than either of its two companions, is quite as interesting as an example of high perfection in quartet writing. The mysteriously vague slow introduction, with its indecision of tonality, suggests, perhaps, a rather more surprising Allegro

Vivace than that which is actually forthcoming. For in this buoyant and unclouded first movement the ideas are as clear and direct as those of Mozart, whose style of part-writing is to some extent reflected, though there are passages in the development, as the following quotation will prove, in which the Beethoven touch is unmistakable.

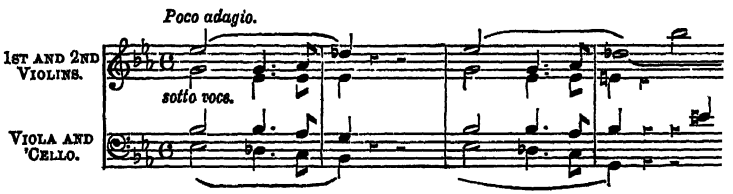
EX. 26.

Incidentally this passage gives us another example of the use of the two upper and the two lower instruments in pairs, fully as effective as the illustration immediately preceding it, though in a different way. It also exhibits Beethoven's method of presenting, in Chamber Music, a kind of canonic device in which he frequently indulged in orchestral works. The Andante con Moto, which forms the second movement, is delicate and tender, and seeks to sound no great emotional depths. But the easy melodious flow of all the parts from beginning to end is especially interesting; so also is the novel use of the *pizzicato* pedal-bass notes which form so important a part in the scheme. The facility of workmanship suggests Schubert, and the suave style of the music, with its constant repetitions of short phrases, anticipates the fashions of a still later period. In the Minuet which succeeds this placid Andante there are certainly no developments or anticipations upon which to remark. It is, indeed, rather an unlooked-for reversion to earlier methods. The Finale, however, into which

the Minuet leads, gives us a magnificent example of the fugal style of writing which assumes so very important an aspect with Beethoven in his later works. Of this more will be said in the next chapter when dealing with special characteristics, and if any further proof were needed of his wonderful power of making a quartet of strings interpret ideas of symphonic, even dramatic, import, a perusal of the examples on pp. 40, 41, and 44, would amply supply it.

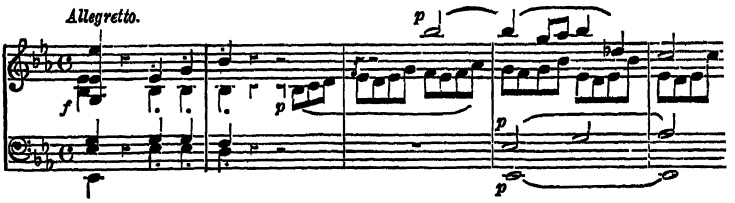
Two more quartets of Beethoven may perhaps fittingly be mentioned while dealing with general principles, the works in E flat major, Op. 74, and in F minor, Op. 95. The E flat quartet may be said to come almost at the end of the "middle period" works, and the F minor to occupy a place by itself, possessing, as it does, attributes of ruggedness which are scarcely a marked characteristic of the works dedicated to Rasoumowsky, though hardly as yet conveying that curious suggestion of groping amongst unfathomable things which gives the final six quartets a place by themselves in musical literature.

The Quartet in E flat begins with a somewhat prolonged Poco Adagio, the theme of which sounds almost like a question,—an anxious appeal which no words could express and no answer satisfy.

EX. 27.

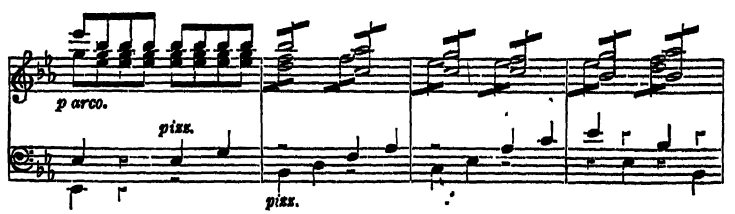


We feel prepared, perhaps, for a less direct message than that which is accorded to us when the Allegretto, which ensues dismisses the interrogations. Maybe it is merely Beethoven's way of emphasising the depth of the question by telling us that no reply is possible.

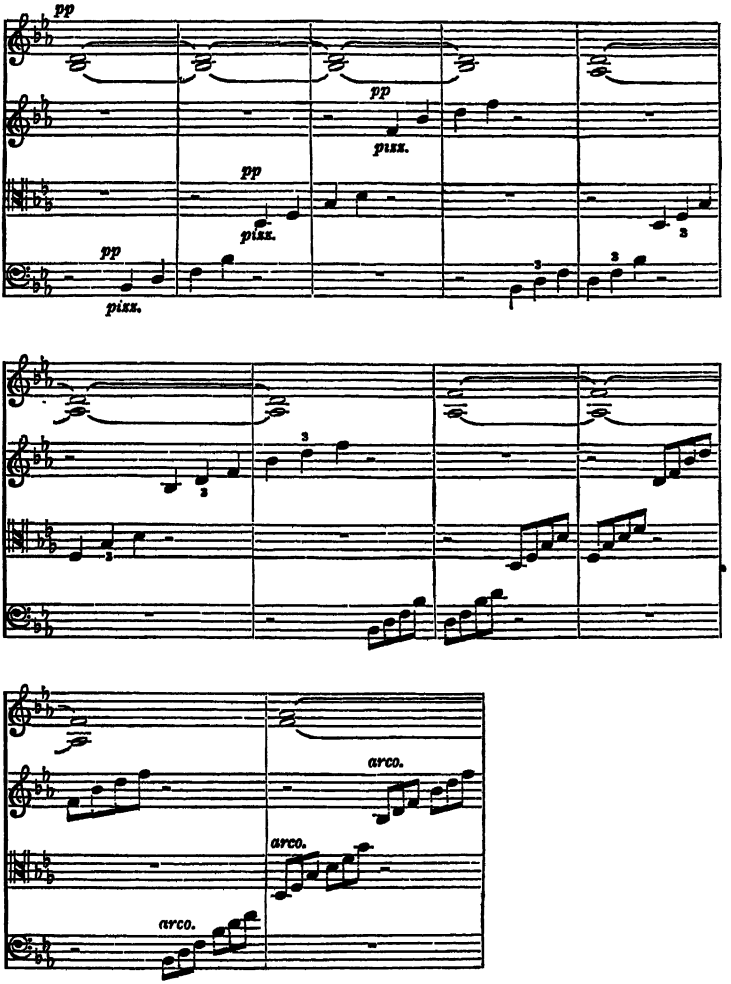
EX. 28.

Nevertheless the movement has many technical points of special interest, some of which, successful as they are when presented here by the genius of Beethoven, might prove dangerous if set forth as examples for us to imitate.

The most outstanding feature is certainly the extensive and unusual employment of *pizzicato* arpeggio figures, passing from one instrument to another. The preponderance of these passages has led to the rather silly title of the "Harp Quartet" being given to the work, and also, as is generally the case when the public is able to call a piece of music by a kind of pet name, to an enormous increase in its popularity.

Immediately after the statement of the principal theme we have passages in which *pizzicato* notes appear, first below, and then above the repeated chords.

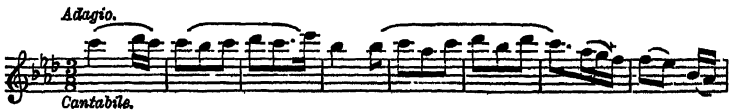
EX. 29.

This is but a suggestion, however, of what is to come.

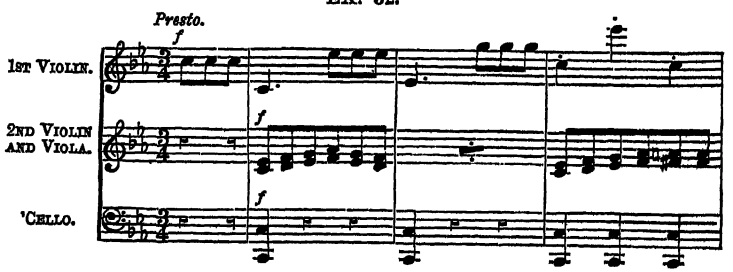
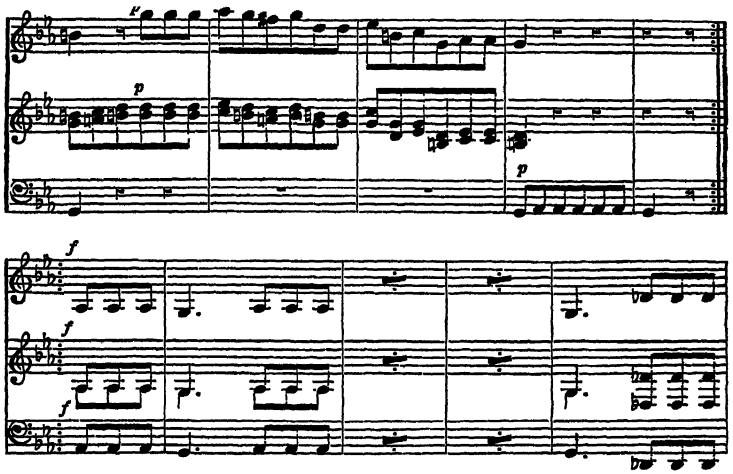
In the Development Section of the movement the idea is very much extended, and we have several remarkable passages of which the following is a sample:—

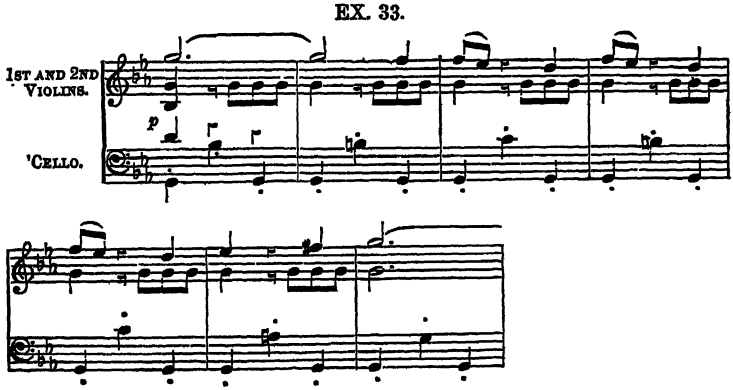
EX. 30.

The above quotation also gives an excellent proof of what was said earlier in this chapter concerning the possibility in quartet-writing of preserving a uniformity of tone-colour, and spreading passages across from one instrument to another. It may be remarked, however, that the differences in tone-quality are less marked in *pizzicato* passages than in those played with

a bow, and it is also far easier to join together a succession of plucked notes (which are necessarily *staccato*) than groups of smooth figures. The last two bars of the foregoing examples, for instance, where the arpeggios are played *col arco*, are seldom as effective in actual performance as those which precede them. There are other places in the same movement where the part-distribution must decidedly be considered risky and of doubtful effect, but on these questions more will be said later.

This originally conceived Allegretto is succeeded by an Adagio, which has great depth of sentiment. Its principal theme belongs to that characteristic class of subjects known to the Germans as "unendlichen Melodien." The first violin at the beginning soars high above its companions, giving forth a song of exquisite sweetness and tenderness, well adapted to the decorative treatment it receives later on when its phrases are embellished with fanciful ornamentations, and the accompaniment is also elaborated and greatly enriched.

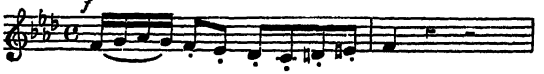
EX. 31.

The Presto which forms the third movement is remarkably vivid, and in some places so symphonic in idea that it seems almost like a sketch for an orchestral scherzo. Its main theme, indeed, is curiously suggestive of the C minor Symphony, a suggestion which its continuation after the first double bar does nothing to dispel.

EX. 32.

This movement is so full of tone combinations which are admirable as models, both in colour and design, that it is difficult to resist the temptation to quote from it at great length. Let us content ourselves with one more extract which will, in itself, illustrate many points. The large capricious skips in the 'cello part here are extremely effectively devised, the melody is most fancifully poised and balanced, whilst no better illustration could be given of the value of a gently insistent rhythm than the thematic repeated G's which give the second violin part such distinction at this stage. The viola for the moment is silent.

EX. 33.

A long *diminuendo* and a *pianissimo* passage follow, in which the 'cello murmurs on its lowest strings for several bars, and then a dramatically sudden *forte* chord of C major ushers in the trio. Here the speed is increased, crotchets being the shortest notes used, and the rhythm resembling $\frac{6}{4}$. If the scherzo itself suggests the Fifth Symphony, there is almost as strong a foreshadowing here of the Ninth, the crotchets walking up and down the scale with a regular precision which decidedly recalls to one's mind the splendour and majesty of the most wonderful of all scherzos. The movement is very long, the trio coming twice and the main material three times, whilst there is a Coda which comes to a pause on the first inversion of a dominant seventh in E flat. Then, with a serenity most welcome after so much bustle and unrest, a calm theme begins, which, with the six finely-wrought variations that follow it, forms a fitting end to a great and most imaginative work.

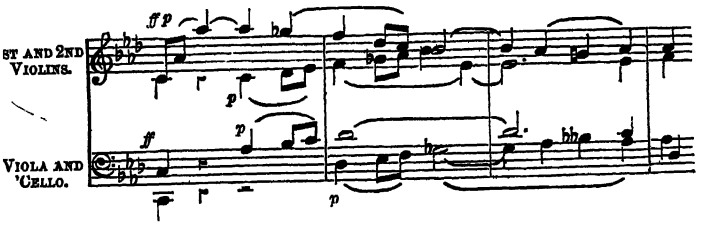
The Quartet in F minor (Op. 95) is shorter and more concise than the work just reviewed, but the ideas are more advanced and the workmanship generally more intricate. The first subject of the opening Allegro con brio literally springs out upon us with a unison passage of colossal force and ruggedness.

EX. 34.

1ST AND 2ND VIOLINS (VIOLA 8ve and 'CELLO two 8ves lower).

It is one of those themes that arrest attention at once and set the listener speculating on the possible developments that might ensue. In treatment (though certainly not in sentiment) we might compare its place in the work with the similarly emphatic first subject of the Quartet in F (Op. 18, No. 1) dealt with on page 23. The first five notes are obviously seized upon and made to serve both in accompaniment and in episodes of a dialogue character, with the result that the general tone of the movement is decidedly busy, and

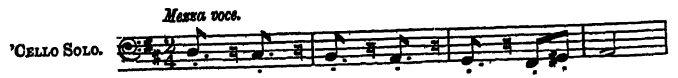
the advent of such tender passages of pure quartet-writing as the following are doubly welcome when they occur.

EX. 35.



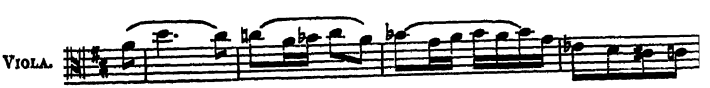
The second movement, an Allegretto ma non troppo, is in the very remote key of D major, the quaint and somewhat expectant little prelude of four bars—

EX. 36.



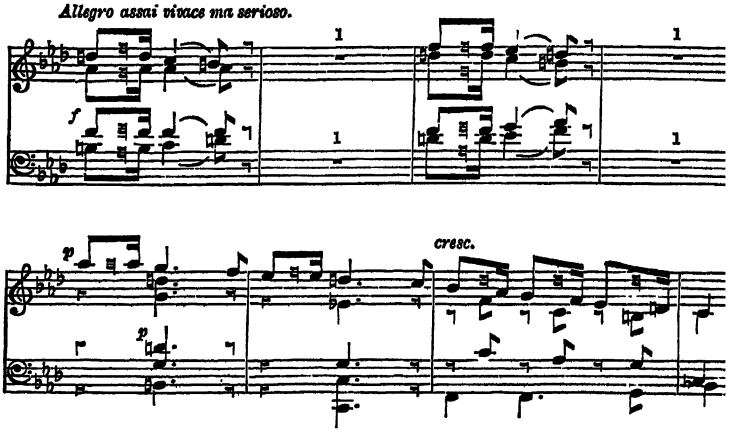
leading to a long melody on the first violin, which seems to shun the idea of coming to a finish, the expected cadence being interrupted twice in succession before being allowed to make its definite appearance. The feeling of unrest thus foreshadowed is clearly present in the ensuing passages, where the viola leads off a kind of *fugato* with a very chromatic subject,

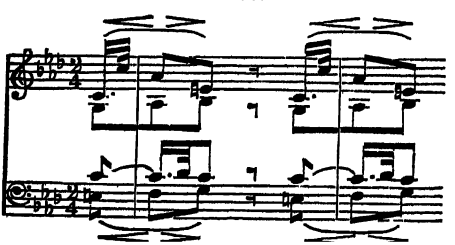
EX. 37.

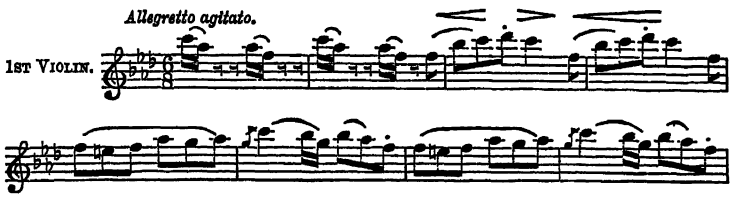


and later the 'cello develops the opening prelude, which at first seemed so little part of the scheme. Presently the principal melody returns, and this time resolutely refuses to come to a cadence at all, the various interruptions culminating in a return of the above chromatic subject, which is developed in a brilliant manner and leads to a mysterious Coda, which pauses upon a diminished seventh chord on B. Taking the

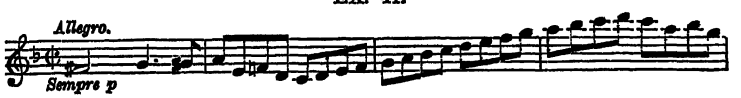
cue from this, the Allegro assai, which constitutes the th movement of the work, starts off as follows:—

EX. 38.

This is far too serious to call a scherzo, though the co struction is somewhat similar to that of those highly extend and developed scherzos which Beethoven had already begun create. An alternative section comes to dispel this lo continued unrest, and seems like a song arising out of de religious contemplation, reminding one somewhat of Bac and when the original subject makes its final appearance it resolute and strong, as though health and strength a comfort had been vouchsafed at last. It is a marvellous planned movement of which no brief review can give a ju appraisal. A very short, but deeply emotional prelude, almo suggesting Wagner in its yearning intensity—

EX. 39.

leads to the Finale, the main subject of which is remarkable for its repeated phrases. This was so rare a device with Beethoven, and so usual a procedure with Mendelssohn and others of a later generation, that, taken by itself, the melody seems to belong to another period altogether.

EX. 40.

It is difficult to believe that such a typically Mendelssohnian melody could have been composed by Beethoven, but if we examine the texture of the movement as a whole we shall see no further resemblances. Indeed, when we find the phrases being split up and appearing as accompanying figures with all sorts of significant twistings and turnings, we shall be set wondering what might have been the result if some of the writers of the succeeding romantic period had possessed Beethoven's habit of thematic economy and his power of sustained insistence upon vital points. The Coda, at all events, is pure unalloyed Beethoven. Beginning with an entirely new theme in an entirely new time-signature,

EX. 41.



it possesses some of that breathless energy which made the conclusion of the third Rasoumowsky quartet so exciting and so dazzling.

It is certainly a passage that lives vividly in one's memory, and is bracing to recall.

This somewhat prolonged investigation of the first eleven quartets of Beethoven has been undertaken in the hope that

an appreciative survey of such great progress and attainment in quartet-writing may be more helpful and stimulating to the student than the plain statement of abstract principles which a teacher or author might easily derive from their study. The wonderful posthumous quartets will be considered at the end of the next chapter, as they occupy a position by themselves, and are not so much a development of what had gone before as a new declaration of faith, and they speak a language hitherto unspoken, and practically never spoken again since Beethoven's death. The methods of their composition will, therefore, be best discussed in company with certain exceptional effects in quartet-writing which might be considered available under some occasional or conceivable conditions. But first an effort will be made to give advice upon every form of writing which may be considered ordinarily legitimate for four stringed instruments, from the easy, flowing elegances of early days to the more subtle *nuances* and complexities which prevail at the present time.

With all the manifold changes of feeling and fashion there are certain principles which stand firm; there are certain weaknesses which must ever be deplorable; and there is a sure standard of clean, honest, and effective workmanship which may always be steadily and worthily sought. These principles, weaknesses, and technical axioms are exemplified in modern music, as well as in the works of the classic masters, and quotations may, therefore, be freely drawn from all writers of experience irrespective of their school or period. The chapter now completed will have fulfilled its mission if it has duly impressed upon the student the need for purity and dignity in his themes, and if the extracts given from Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven have helped him to appreciate the really expansive capabilities of four stringed instruments.

CHAPTER III.

THE STRING QUARTET.

II.

Resources and Effects.

In the previous chapter little more was attempted than a brief survey of certain general principles of quartet-writing suggested by the achievements of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven in his earlier and middle periods. One is tempted to say that Beethoven and Schubert carried the treatment of the String Quartet to its highest point of perfection. But while it is unsafe to make a statement which is in itself a prophecy of either decadence or stagnation, there is little doubt that from a purely technical aspect these two masters discovered the extent of the possibilities of this combination, whilst at the same time recognising its limitations as few composers following afterwards have found themselves able to do. The wisdom of Beethoven and Schubert has been in no way so surely proved as in the compositions of their successors in which those limitations have been grievously overstepped. This is, perhaps, neither regrettable nor discouraging. Having been shown how far we may go, and how far we may not go, we may settle down to work with a greater assurance of success. If we are not satisfied with our quartet of strings, we may try a septet of saxophones, and settle for ourselves, and those that follow us, the maximum of audacity that may be obtained, legitimately, from this new medium. It is likely, however, that the more we study the question the more assured we shall feel that the possibilities of developing our

style and employing the most modern idioms are by no means exhausted, even within the seemingly narrow boundary of four stringed instruments. The important point is that they should still be recognised as four stringed instruments, and this is where the wisdom of Beethoven or Schubert may help us to see more clearly. It would be extremely foolish to assert that either Beethoven or Schubert discovered every legitimate effect of which the String Quartet is capable. The development of modern musical thought has made many hitherto undreamed-of devices possible. Much of that development has tended towards greater complexity of construction, it is true, and extreme complexity and polyphonic massiveness are only in a limited degree suitable in quartet-writing.

The great classical traditions are doubtless slowly passing away, and our music, of necessity, in a strenuous and complex age, reflects the spirit of the life we live. But there have been other sides to modern development, many of which make no strain upon a slender medium. The writers of the newer French school, for example, have indulged in subtleties of rhythm which are, from their very delicacy of conception, more suited to such a combination as the String Quartet than to a more cumbersome machinery.

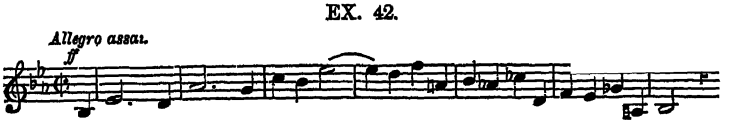
Even if the older ideals of form may seem inevitably to cling around a medium of expression which is closely bound up with all that is best in the classical traditions, there is, from a logical point of view, no real barrier to the free expression of modern musical utterance in this medium. In our own country an enthusiastic amateur musician has, through generous encouragement, already proved that a one-movement "Phantasy" may be made the vehicle for many novel modes of expression without either exceeding the boundaries of Chamber Music or too slavishly following in the wake of tradition. On the other hand we may point with pride to at least one real String Quartet by a living Englishman[1] in which the constructive principles of each movement are

[1] Ralph Vaughan-Williams, who in his Quartet in G minor even adopts the old-fashioned "Minuet and Trio" and "Rondo Capriccioso" for headings to two of the movements.

practically identical with those of Mozart or Beethoven, whilst the ideas and their treatment are fully charged with the most modern independence and elusiveness of sentiment.

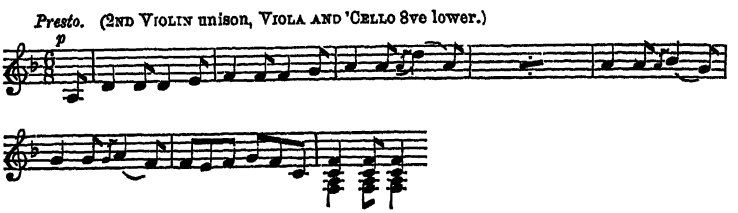
It will be well, therefore, to approach the study of the special features and difficulties of quartet-writing without prejudice and with an open mind, and to recognise that there may be many methods of doing the same thing, all of which may be good and legitimate in their several ways. With this always in view, an attempt will be made to give examples from the most modern works as well as from the classics, both in respect of what may be accepted as suitable, and of what should be shunned as unsuitable and outside the boundaries that good taste and a true appreciation of the essence of Chamber Music have set up.

It will be remembered that at the beginning of the previous chapter, whilst laying stress upon the separate individuality of the four instruments, the author had occasion to allude to the possibility of preserving an almost perfect uniformity of tone throughout the quartet. Amongst the quotations given from the Beethoven quartets one at least (page 39) illustrated this point in a very clear manner, by showing how a composer might allow an arpeggio passage to pass on, as it were, from one instrument to another. This same quality of uniformity will also enable a composer to make a specially effective use of unison passages, where one consistent colour, both in attacking and sustaining the notes, is of great value. There is a quartet of Cherubini, in E flat, in which the subject of the last movement leads off in the following spirited fashion:—

EX. 42.

The first and second violins and viola play in unison, and the 'cello in the octave below, with a very strong effect which no double-notes or chords would intensify.

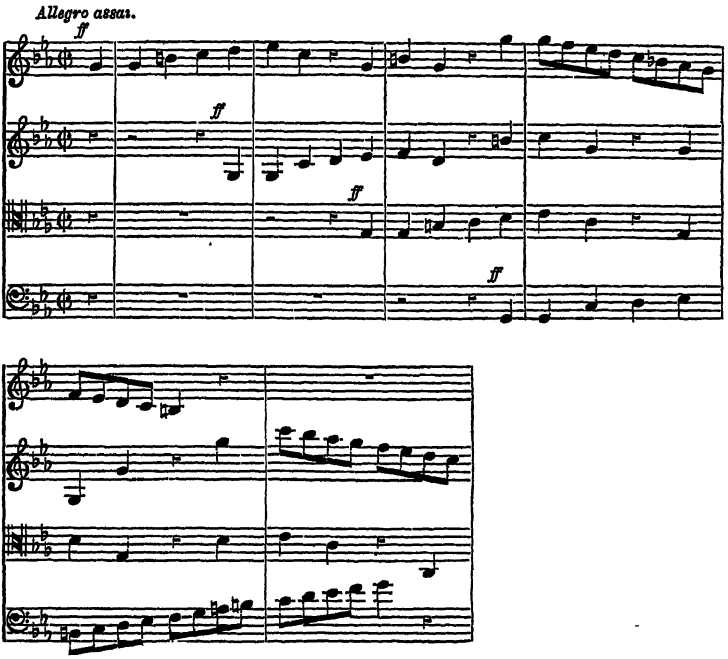
Perhaps the finest example of such treatment in all quartet music is to be found in the posthumous Quartet in D minor of Schubert, where the theme of the Finale continues in almost unbroken unison for sixteen bars.

EX. 43.



The effect of this, as no one who knows it will need to be told, is magical. But it is an exceptional case. Generally speaking, a prolonged unison passage is inclined to sound, if not exactly cheap, either rather empty of invention or orchestral in character. In Beethoven and Mozart unison passages for all four instruments are very rare, and almost always of quite brief duration. It may, perhaps, be said that these remarks apply to all kinds of musical combinations, and that the warning given is one of far wider application. This is no doubt true, but the fact remains that a quartet is about the most unsuitable medium through which to present a long passage solely mono-melodic in character, and that what might be quite acceptable and forceful for twenty bars in an orchestral piece may sound very threadbare and poor when played for half a dozen bars by four fiddles.

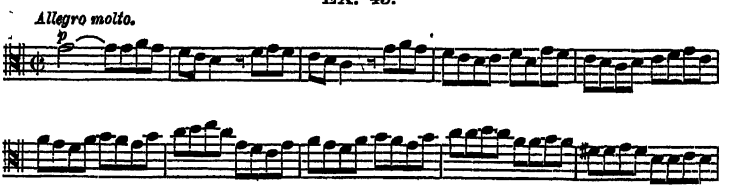
A very much more important method of writing, rendered effective by reason of this exact balance and satisfactory blend of the four instruments, is what may be conveniently called the Contrapuntal style. The purely contrapuntal treatment of themes was much indulged in by some of the earlier quartet writers. The following example from Cherubini's Quartet in E flat is typical of this method. The music is old-fashioned in character, but very clearly shows the strong effectiveness of such devices given forth in a forceful and transparent manner.

EX. 44.

In writing such as this, which is so clear in design, it is highly necessary to exercise great care to avoid the clashing or "hitting" of notes which do not harmonise with one another. Even in the above example there is a place where the effect is not likely to be quite good, the A flat against the G at the end of the fourth bar rather disturbing the purity of the passage. Of course this is a quick movement, and much may be written in an Allegro assai of this nature that would not pass muster in an Adagio. If, indeed, this example were played at a slow pace, the moment of contact alluded to above would serve as an excellent instance of a species of careless workmanship that is wholly inadmissible in a quartet.

This vigorous style of imitative writing was very much affected by Cherubini, and, as we know, Beethoven had a very great admiration for the works of his contemporary, more than

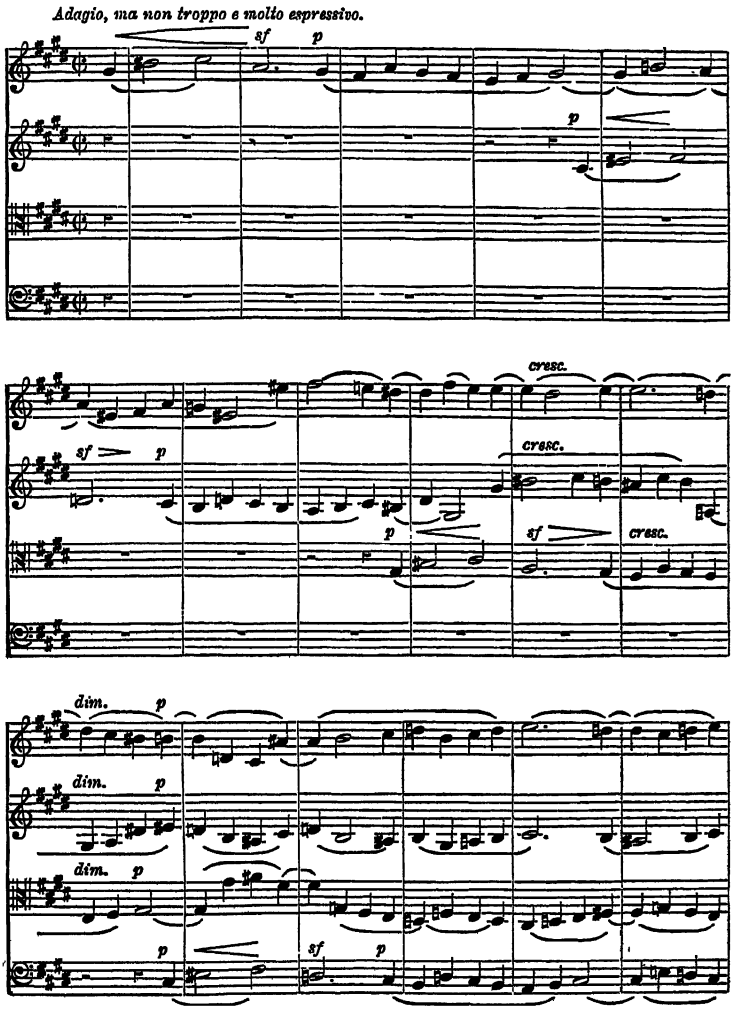
once speaking of him as the greatest musician of that age. It is not, therefore, surprising to find that Beethoven adopts this highly contrapuntal style in some of his quartets, even constructing whole movements upon a plan which unites the attributes of binary and fugal forms, laying stress upon the special contrapuntal features which characterise the latter mode of development. Perhaps his most successful essay in this direction is the Finale of the third Rasoumowsky quartet (already mentioned), in which the vigour of the opening subject is maintained throughout the whole of what is practically a *moto perpetuo* with astonishing inventive resource. The subject is a very long one, and the viola is entrusted with its initial presentation:—

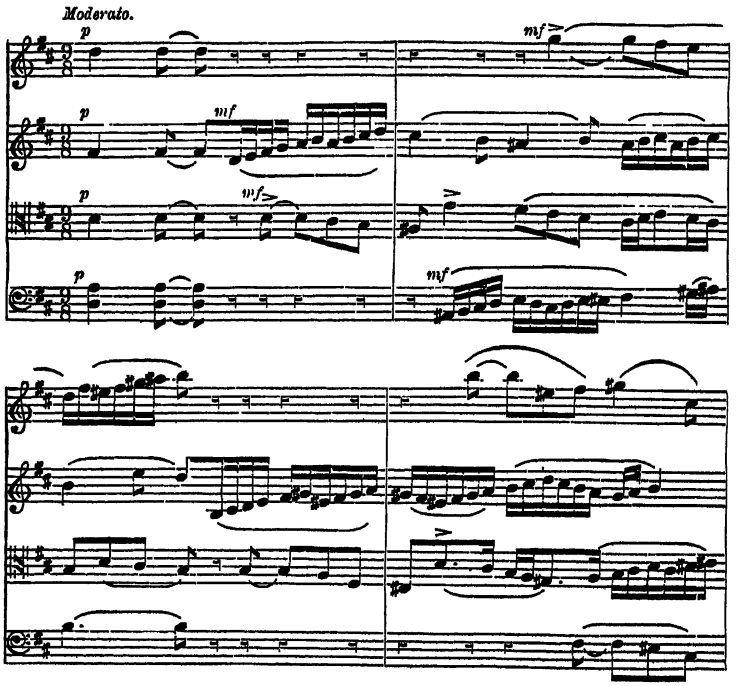
EX. 45.



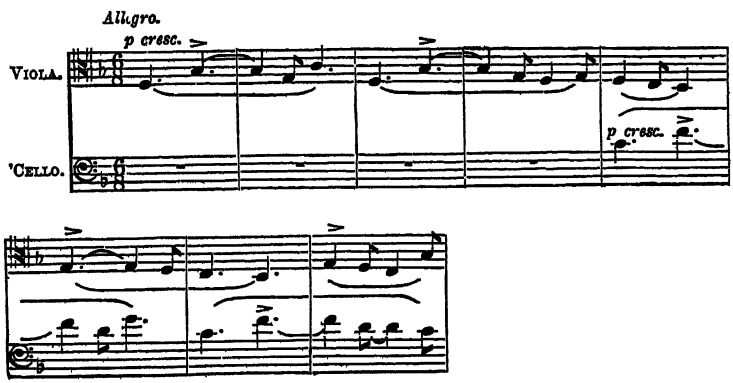
This subject is answered a fifth higher by the second violin, and the other parts enter in turn in the manner of a strict fugue. But there are differences. When the fourth entry begins, the first and second violins play the subject in octaves, the viola and 'cello playing the counter-subject in octaves against them, and this effective two-part treatment continues for some time, leading to a climax with strong chords and an absence of all contrapuntal pretensions. Moreover, there are many places where the colouring is very marked, and where the effect is certainly not entirely due either to uniformity of tone or the mere ingenuity of the counterpoint (see page 98). At the same time the main design is contrapuntal, and these varieties of treatment serve, as all such varieties should serve, to throw into strong relief the passages in which the skilful interweaving of running melodies is the chief and most arresting quality. In the last quartets of Beethoven we again find a leaning towards the contrapuntal manner. But in such a

movement as that from which the following bars are taken, the music is so spiritual that one hesitates to call it by such an ugly word. This is the opening of the great Quartet in C sharp minor, Op. 131, and one may linger long in contemplation of its serene beauty and perfection.

EX. 46.

Widely differing in character from the previous extracts, the following four bars from Tschaïkowsky's first quartet, in D major, Op. 11, are exceedingly interesting, and show a very masterly command over the resources of this kind of writing in modern music.

EX. 47.

The above part-writing will bear the closest inspection. It is pure quartet music, being both well-designed and sensitive. The most notable quartet writers of recent times, however, seem almost to have lost the feeling for this particular form of writing, and few examples as good as the above, from that point of view, could be given from the works of present-day musicians. No doubt there are reasons for the change of style, for modern ideas seem to demand more attention to colour and

emphasis than a level flow of melodies running side by side can be made to express. Without unduly dwelling upon this point one may say, in passing,—by way of warning—that passages of an extremely complex contrapuntal character should nowadays seldom be very prolonged. An over-indulgence in this kind of writing makes many of the older quartets (by Cherubini, Dittersdorf, and others) seem rather dull and pedantic, and several modern ones (by Bruckner, Reger, and others) unduly forced and overcrowded with unnecessary complexities. It is quite possible, moreover, whilst combining one's melodic ideas and evenly distributing the interest, to accentuate at the same time the separate tone-character of the instruments, and thus heighten the effect. In Schumann's Quartet in A minor, Op. 41, No. 1, there is a passage of a fugal nature which begins on the viola and is answered by the 'cello:—

EX. 48.

Here it should be noted that the "subject" is asserted with the full broad tone of the lower strings of the viola, whilst the "answer" is allotted to the A string of the 'cello. If the composer had done the obvious thing—by giving the notes, just as they stand above, first to the 'cello and then to the viola—the effect would have been totally different, and the whole passage would have sounded weaker and more ordinary, having completely lost its distinctive *solo* colouring.

This brings us to a point where a further consideration of the separate individuality of the instruments alluded to in the last chapter may fittingly be attempted.

The special characteristics of the violin as a solo instrument are so well known that it is not necessary to dwell upon its varied capabilities. It is of all instruments the most versatile, and at the same time the most commanding. The chief violinist of an orchestra is considered next in importance to the conductor, and even in the most perfectly organised quartet the chief authority and leadership must always be assigned to the player of the first violin part. Moreover, he will generally play the highest notes of the score and therefore his prominence is assured, not only with that vast concourse of ordinary listeners who attend to nothing else, but with the cultured few who, with all their understanding, must still feel the natural supremacy of the most clearly evident outline in the design.

Instances of the most varied employment of the first violin in high and low melodic passages, in figuration, in sustained strength and vigorous rhythmic emphasis, as well as in tripping delicacies and dainty elaborations, will be found in two-thirds of the musical examples which are scattered so plentifully throughout these pages. It may be more profitable, therefore, to consider for a moment the claims of the second violinist, seeing that there is more danger of his undue neglect than of his companion's displacement. It will be well if the parts are frequently allowed to cross, the second violin having its fair share of the chief melodic interest, and also that rests be given in the top line which will enable the second player sometimes to occupy the place of leader for the time being.

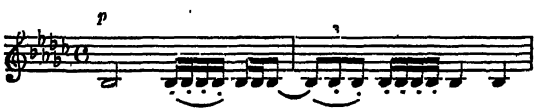
In the examples given on pages 18, 60, 62, and 77, it will be seen how well this can be done. Such treatment not only adds to the variety of which the combination is capable, but it often gives a welcome prominence and freshness of effect to the first violin part when it re-enters.

The second violin may also be given a prominent function if the composer employs it in passages which depend largely for their effect upon the consistent use of figuration. The

example from Schubert's Quartet in A minor on page 65 is a case in point; another, more assertive and more modern in character, may be found in the Scherzo of Stanford's Quartet in A minor, Op. 45, where the quaint figure

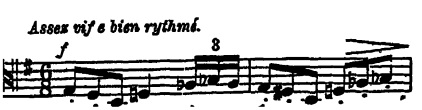
EX. 49.

dominates the score for the greater part of the movement. The mysterious second violin passage from Tschaïkowsky's E flat minor Quartet, Op. 30, which adds so much to the solemnity of the Andante funebre, may also be cited in this connection:—

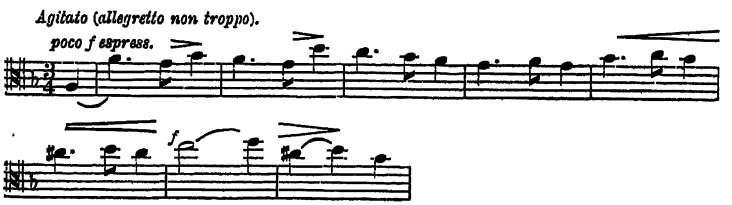
EX. 50.

There is a deep import in this throbbing inner voice which gives the instrument a specially suitable function.

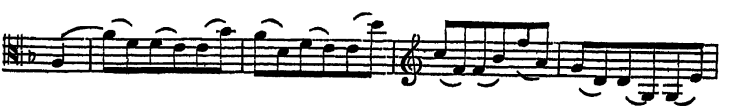
All modern quartet writers have seized upon the opportunities for emphasis and prominence which the peculiar *timbre* of the viola affords, in order to give additional colour and point to their music.

The solo passages which open the quartets of Dvořák in F and Smetana in E minor (both of which are quoted, to illustrate another point, on pages 71 and 72) are excellent examples of this; and all who have heard Debussy's remarkable work will recall the passage which, preceded by four *pizzicato* chords, makes its appearance in the second movement:—

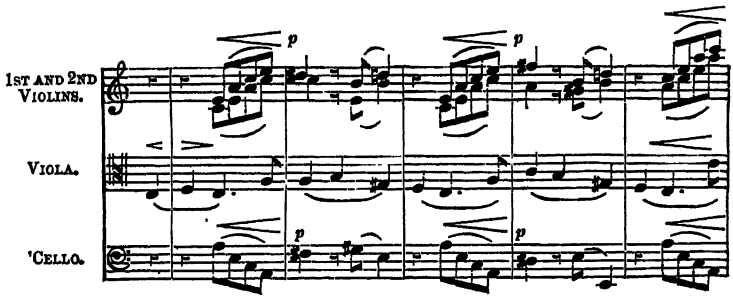
EX. 51.

This very strongly marked and singular phrase forms a figuration of much point which dominates the greater part of the piece. The viola tone gives the utmost character to the little melody, and though the same phrase is afterwards allotted to the other instruments, and indeed appears in a transformed guise at the end of the whole quartet, one never quite loses the sense that this is essentially a tenor *motif*, and receives its every appearance instinctively feeling that it has reference to the peculiar colouring of the viola.

Even more important is the part played by the viola in the third movement of Brahms's Quartet in B flat, Op. 67. Here the instrument is given additional prominence from the fact that its three companions are muted throughout. In this instance also the upper notes, with their singularly appealing quality—less bright than that of the violin—come more prominently into play:—

EX. 52.

After twelve bars in this strain a kind of variant is introduced, the viola still predominating:—

EX. 53.

The movement being in Minuet form, one looks, perhaps, for contrast in the Trio section. But here again, though we find changes of key and figuration, the viola maintains its

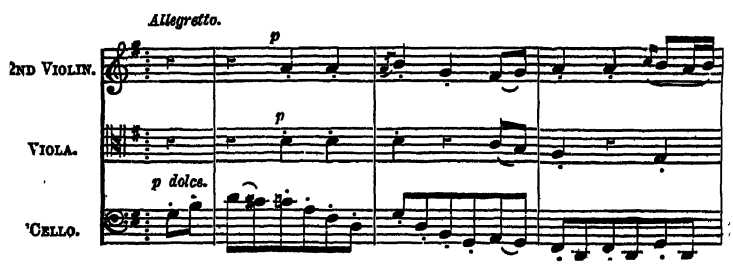
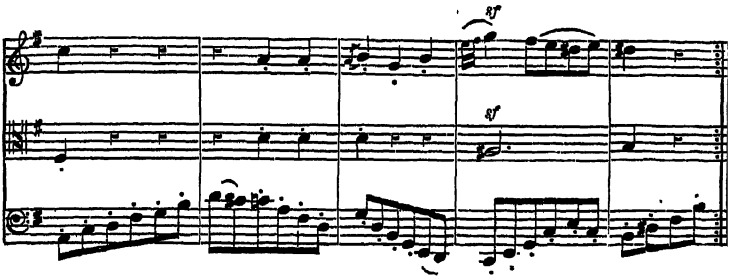
supremacy, this time singing a song which, at the beginning, exhibits the richer tones of the low notes, effectively set forth to the pulsation of a gentle and most delicate rhythm.

EX. 54.

In the whole literature of Chamber Music one could scarcely find a better example of the capabilities and range of the viola than in this single movement. Brahms invariably wrote lovingly for this instrument, giving it a melodic importance that few composers before him had considered suitable, finding, no doubt, in its tones a sympathetic exponent for those deeply solemn melodies by which he so constantly expressed the character of his musical impulses. A close study of the three quartets—in B flat, A minor, and C minor—of this master will unquestionably help towards a better understanding of the scope and power of the middle "voice" in a String Quartet.

For the interpretation of isolated melodic passages in the tenor compass the 'cello is generally superior to the viola by reason of the greater sweetness of its quality. The 'cello has unquestionably the power of becoming more vocal and articulate than any other stringed instrument. Indeed, in its excess of tone-sweetness lies the chief danger for those who would write for it, and it is certainly unwise to use the 'cello too continuously as a solo instrument in a quartet, lest the music should assume a sentimental complexion. One can scarcely conceive anything more horribly inartistic than a sentimental String Quartet—even a quartet in which there are

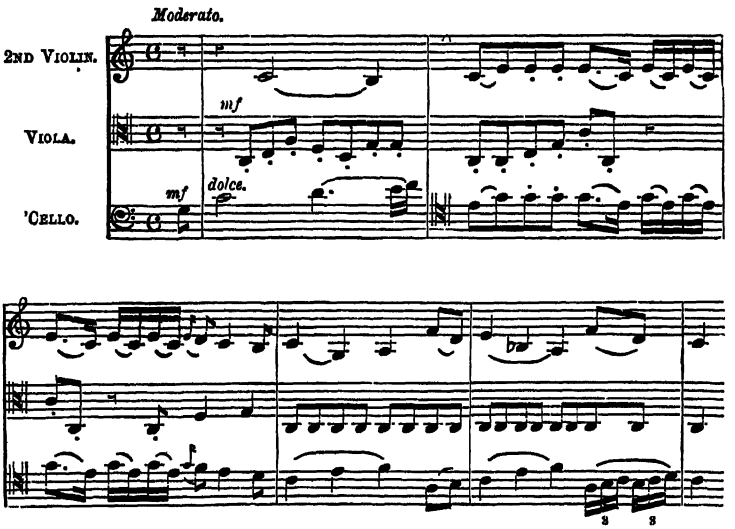
occasional lapses into sentimental expression is rather difficult to accept. One might almost advise the young composer to attend a recital of 'cello solos in order to hear a surfeit of the kind of thing he most certainly ought not to write in Chamber Music, for 'cellists, like singers, are so frequently tempted to play what pleases the average public, in the exaggerated style that is called "expression," that they are apt to lose all sense of the dignity and nobility of their instrument, and seem to think that unless their part lies almost entirely on the A string they will not be able to exhibit their powers to advantage. The 'cellist who is a really good quartet-player, however, will be able to perceive some other aspects of the case, and will make no less effect from incisive and rhythmic passages than from those in which the appeal is more smoothly melodic. Some illustrations may perhaps be fittingly given here, in order to set forth two or three of the many possible moods in which the 'cello, as a separate entity, may make itself felt in quartet-music.

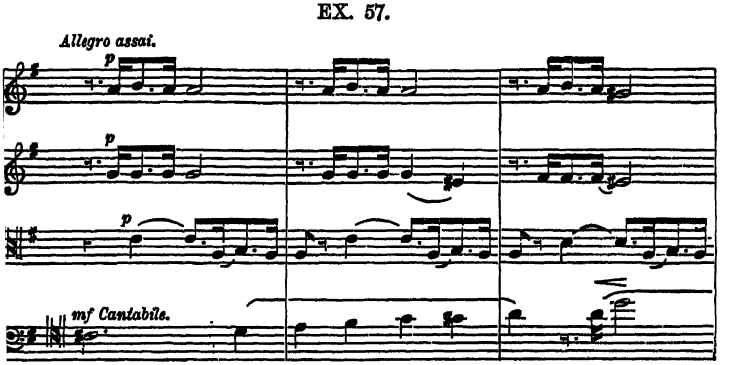
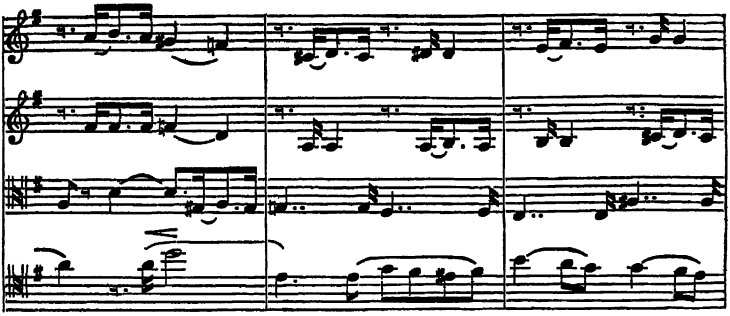
The bright and busy Trio from the Minuet movement of Haydn's Quartet in G, Op. 54, No. 1, is an exceptionally good instance of the 'cello in a gracious, yet somewhat agile, mood. Moreover, it exhibits a due regard for the effectiveness of those lower strings which are so often neglected in solo writing. As the deeper tones are not by any means so easily made prominent, it will be observed with what wisdom Haydn has confined the arrangement of the other parts to the simplest possible expression of delicate outlines which never obscure the main material.

EX. 55

One of the greatest problems that the beginner has to encounter in using the 'cello for solo passages in a quartet is the difficulty of providing a suitable and adequate bass. In a passage such as the above, where the bass itself is the solo, this does not, of course, present itself; but the 'cello will often be required to play melodies which are not only at a higher pitch but which require a bass part to support them.

The fact that the viola can play no note lower than the C on the second space in the bass clef, makes this a matter which demands considerable skill and ingenuity. A composer will often be guided by such practical considerations in his choice of keys for passages of this kind.

At the beginning of Haydn's Quartet in C (Op. 20, No. 2) we find this well exemplified. The 'cello melody has ample support from the viola tones here used, but had the key of the movement been B flat instead of C such a distribution of parts would manifestly have been impossible. We may note also that the composer has contrived to keep the second violin below the solo for the most part, but had this been arranged otherwise it is not likely that the distinctive and strong tones of the 'cello, on its A string, would have been obscured by the low notes of a violin, for at the fourth and fifth bars, where the parts do momentarily cross, no change of effect is noticeable. If, however, the viola had at any point played at a higher pitch than the 'cello, the effect of a consistently moving bass-support would have been lost altogether.

EX. 56.

If a violoncello melody is pitched very high, the difficulty of providing both bass and accompaniment is naturally lessened. In the following quotation from Stanford's Quartet in G, Op. 44 (the first few bars of the second subject of the first movement), a great deal more freedom is allowed to the viola in its task of providing the basis of the design.

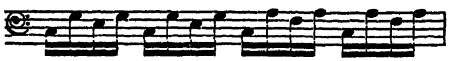
EX. 57.

This example is interesting from other points of view also. We see here the great value of rests consistently used in order to give greater clearness and prominence to the melody at the beginning of each bar. We may also note that the subordinate figures with which the two violins fill in the harmony, although in no way obscuring either the prominence of the chief melody or the clear and direct flow of the viola bass, possess, nevertheless, a separate rhythmic design of which one is plainly and continuously conscious.

This brings us to the brink of a very large subject, of which it will not be possible to speak exhaustively within the limits of a short treatise, although something must be attempted.

The question of the proper employment of melody and accompaniment in quartet-writing is, indeed, a highly important one. A composer like Schubert, for instance, depended very largely in all his music upon the effect of the song-like melodies which he composed so fluently, and the essence of their effectiveness lies largely in their transparent simplicity, unobscured by decoration or undue prominence of rhythmic and harmonic elaboration. Yet he wrote some of the most beautiful String Quartets in existence, and did not desert his lyric style in producing them.

It is impossible to lay down any definite rules as to what is and what is not admissible in the nature of accompaniment in a quartet. In general, however, it may be said that nothing sounds more false or empty in Chamber Music than the constant use of bustling figures, without melodic curves, to

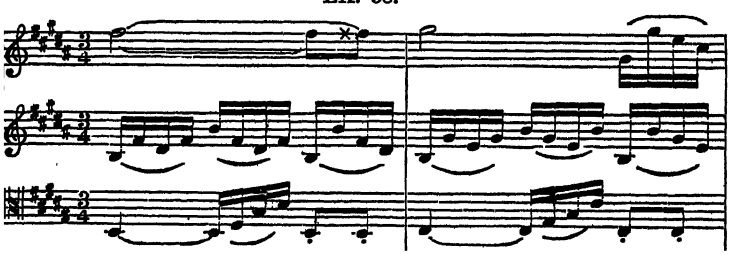
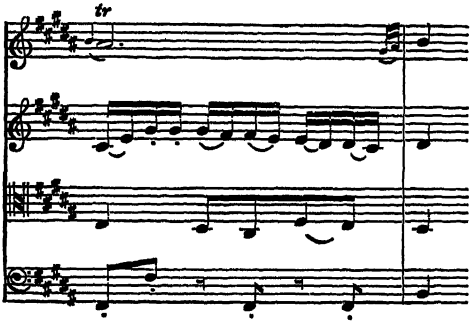
do duty as a background to the subject-matter. Such devices as tremolos, the "Alberti bass":—



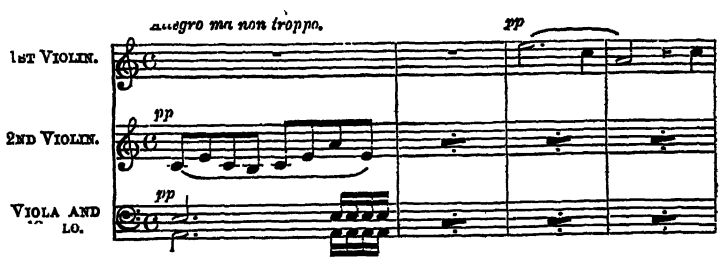
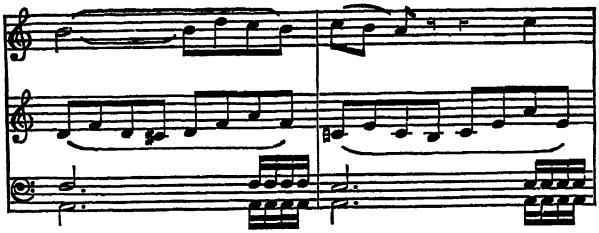
and groupings of a similar nature (having, as Mr. W. H Hadow says, "a factitious air of being busy") are totally unsuitable in work of this sort, and it may be said, generally speaking, that if figuration be employed in a quartet it should have some separate melodic interest of its own. In the quartets of Haydn and Mozart, and even of Beethoven, such devices may occasionally be found, but surprisingly seldom are they without some saving grace of punctuation, phrasing, or accentuation, which lifts them out of the common rut and gives them a kind of purposeful significance, even where their function is obviously mere accompaniment and nothing else. Besides, music has undoubtedly advanced since these days in some respects, and one of these respects is the attitude of musicians towards the subordinate portions of their musical structure. Beyond question the use of bare accompaniment, naked and unashamed, in music of a modern character is to be deprecated. In Chamber Music there is no justification for it whatever.

A few illustrations from the works of great quartet writers will perhaps prove helpful, by showing various interesting devices which have been utilised by them for enhancing the beauty of their purely melodic strains.

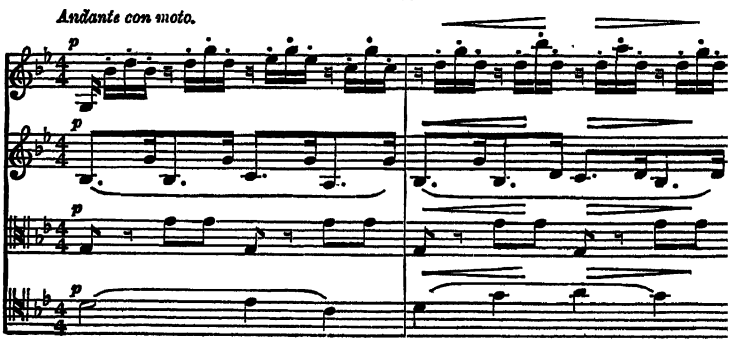
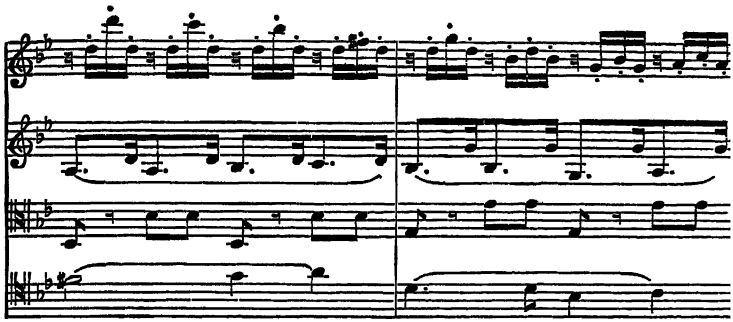
The following three bars from one of the later quartets of Haydn (the Quartet in B minor, Op. 64, No. 2) will prove that even this early master had a keen sense of the value of interesting and consistent figuration:—

EX. 58.

Here the harmonies are of the simplest possible character, but each of the three instruments accompanying the solo passage of the first violin has a distinct rhythmic figure of its own, and the three parts are blended together with the happiest effect.

Such examples of the employment of regular accompanying figures are, however, comparatively rare in Haydn and Mozart, and even in Beethoven, whose quartet music was generally too closely interwoven in thematic texture to admit the use of much subordinate accompaniment. If we turn to the scores of Schubert, we shall find some of the happiest instances of simply, yet pointedly, accompanied melodies which it is possible to discover in all music. There is surely no finer example than the well-known opening of the Quartet in A minor, Op. 29, too familiar to quote, perhaps, were it not that one cannot recall too often the beauty of its limpid flow.

EX. 59.

No one who has heard this quartet will need to be tol that the little *pianissimo* figure of a dotted minim and fou semiquavers, so unobtrusively murmured by the viola an 'cello at the beginning, becomes enormously important in th scheme of the movement, being heard sometimes as a throbbin inner-part, and sometimes in the form of full four-part chords It is the perfection of accompaniment if, as here, the accom paniment itself is of importance as thematic material. A quartet is, as it were, so choice a thing that no shred or crum of it should be wasted, and to allow even a few bars o padding or 'filling-in' to find a place in it is to spoil th delicacy of the whole design, to lessen one's sense of it possible perfection.

Again, in the almost equally well-known posthumous Quarte in D minor we have excellent examples of the same art. Le us take, for instance, the third Variation upon the "Death an the Maiden" theme, with its subtle blending of rhythms sup porting a tenor melody sung by the 'cello.

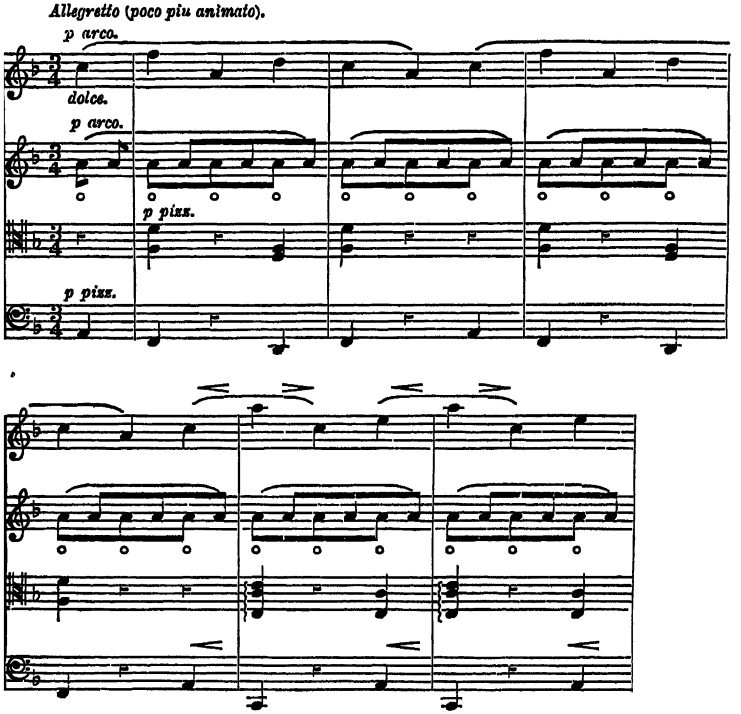
EX. 60.

The listener is not conscious of any complexity in the accompaniment here. It is more elaborate on paper than in sound. The distinctive characteristics of each part are maintained with unbroken fluency throughout the entire Variation and there is at no point any sense of effort to maintain the easy flow of the music.

In order to develop the power of inventing interesting note-designs and figurations, which is nowadays in Chamber Music so needful an accomplishment, the student is strongly recommended to write quartet movements in Variation form (in which a mastery of such devices is absolutely necessary to success) and to study the works of Schubert, Brahms, Dvořák and some of the modern Russian writers—notably Tschaïkowsky, Borodin, and Tanieff.

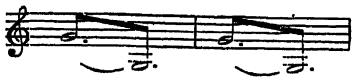
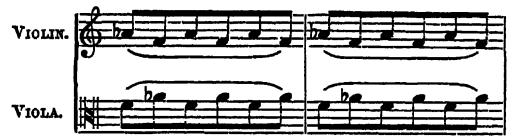
The works of all these composers are full of rhythmic life and energy, and, whilst exhibiting a strong sense of colour are yet generally safe models as Chamber Music.

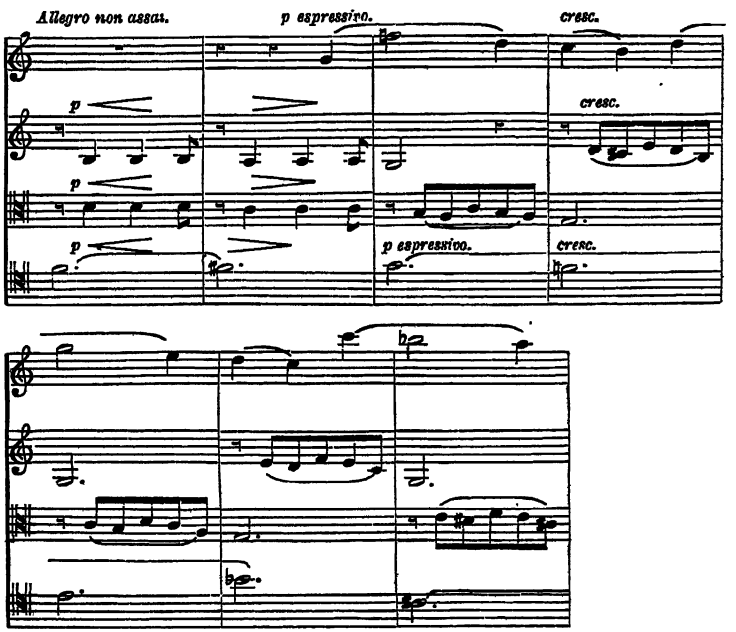
In Brahms especially we shall find absolute purity of style combined with the most perfect workmanship, and the happiest instances of his mastery of this particular art are to be found in his quartets. Already, on page 59, an example has been given of his use of the viola for solo passages, and that example is an equally good illustration of his treatment of a gracefully phrased accompanying figure.

In the following extract it is the first violin that sings and the background provided by the other instruments is quite exceptionally delicate and interesting.

EX. 61.

These six bars, which are quoted from the 3rd movement of Brahms's Quartet in C minor, Op. 51, No. 1, give an instance of a charming use of *pizzicato* chords as accompaniment, and also illustrate another special effect not before mentioned.

The peculiar notation of the second violin part may need some explanation to those who are not string players. The manner of interpretation is this. The notes marked O are played on the open A string, whilst the others (with stems turned upwards) are played on the stopped D string. This enables the passage to be *bowed*, and gives a specially smooth effect which could not otherwise be obtained by repeated notes. When in the course of the movement the note is changed from A to G, Brahms does not repeat the G, and thus rob the passage of its smoothness, but changes the notes thus—

EX. 62.

which more nearly approximates to the original sound than would the repetition of notes on the same string. A similar effect may be obtained, of course, by the crossing of two parts to give a smooth repetition of chords—

but this is a more familiar device which may be noted in the works of many modern writers, and is in dangerous proximity to a well-worn orchestral formula. In the following beautiful example of quartet-writing, also from Brahms (Quartet in A minor, Op. 51, No. 2—Finale), we shall find much to claim our attention in the brief space of seven bars.

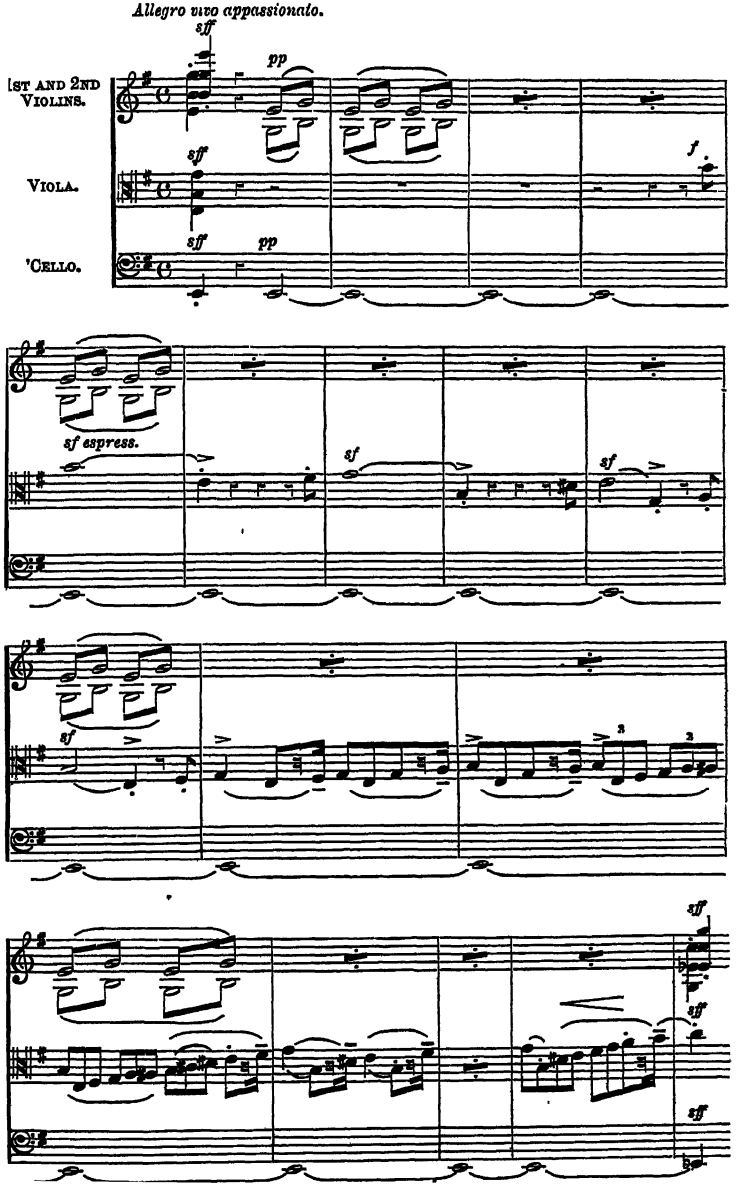
EX. 63.

Here again the first violin has the chief melodic material, but with it the 'cello is employed to give rich support to the theme—somewhat in the nature of an *obbligato* to a song. We may note, also, how charming are the little crossing figures allotted to the second violin and viola, and how the choice of this key for the melody makes it possible for even the former instrument to play the bass part. The whole passage is a perfect model alike in its tenderness and expressive beauty, and in the felicitous curvature of the design with which it is adorned.

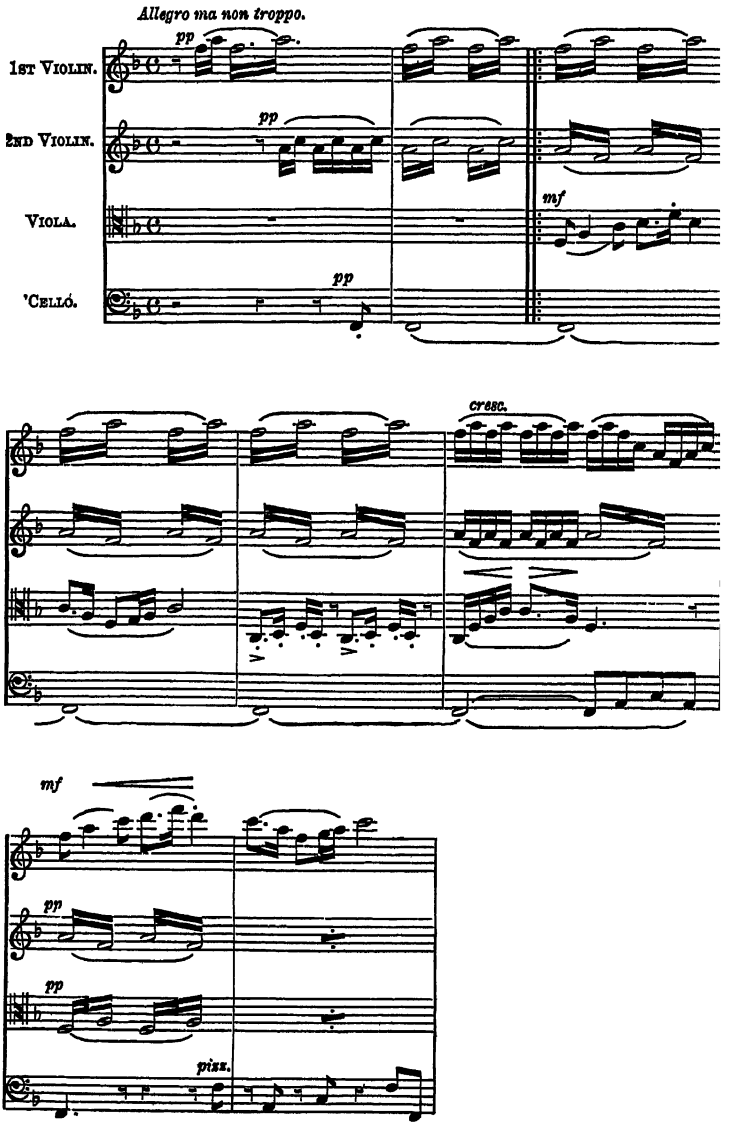
The Quartet in F major, Op. 96, by Dvořák, one of the most successful chamber works of modern days, may be studied with great profit, especially for its mastery of rhythmic resource.[1] The melody with which the first movement opens is allotted to the viola, and is essentially a solo or "character" passage. It is accompanied by a waving semiquaver figure on the violins, and a held low note (*pp*) on the 'cello. This was not a new effect. An equally emphatic viola subject treated in an *exactly* similar way opens the famous quartet ("Aus Meinem Leben") by Dvořák's teacher, Smetana, which was written several years earlier. There is no doubt that the pupil was indebted to the master for his method, but there is also no doubt that the pupil had found for himself a more excellent way of composing a string quartet.

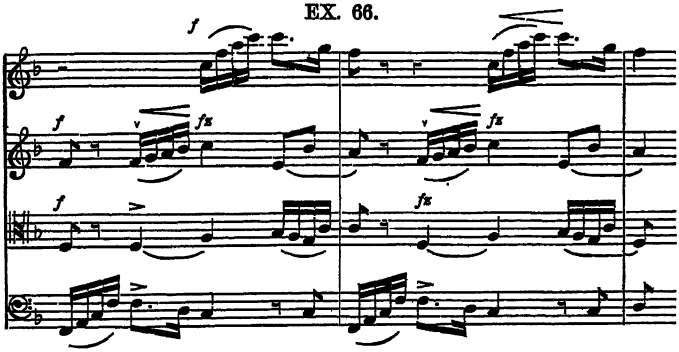
A comparison of the opening of these two works is so extremely interesting and instructive to the student that the first few bars of each are here printed on successive pages.

[1] This work is often described, even on concert programmes, as "The Nigger Quartet."

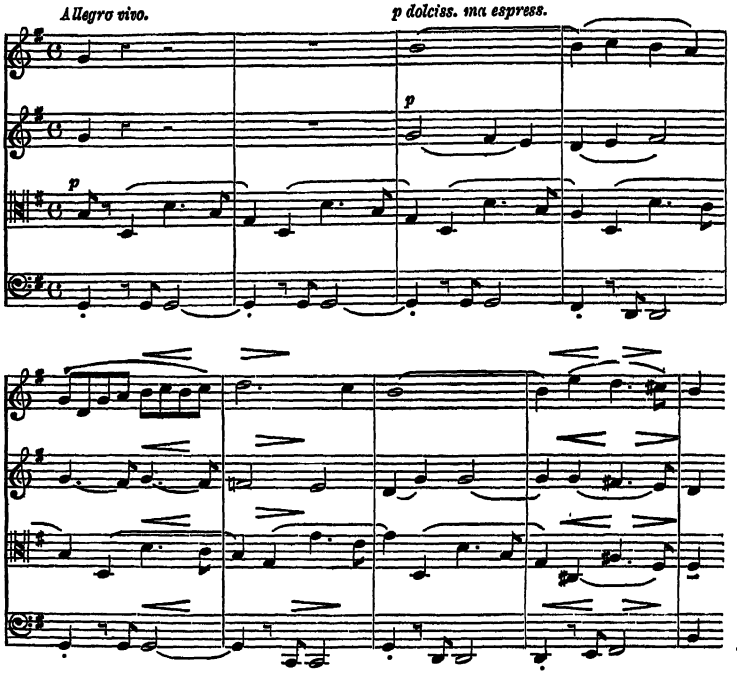
Like the same composer's symphony "From the New World," it is generally believed to be founded upon traditional tunes of the African races settled in America. The author has excellent authority for stating that, so far from this being the case, not a single Negro melody is employed either in the quartet or the symphony. According to Mr. H. E. Krehbiel, who knew the composer well, Dvořák merely "adopted the idiom of slave song and its spirit, and embodied them in melodies of his own creation, for the purpose of showing American composers that they had a body of true folk-song in their own country which might be utilised in building up a national school."

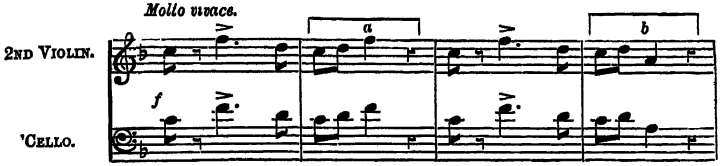
EX. 64. SMETANA, QUARTET IN E MINOR.

EX. 65.

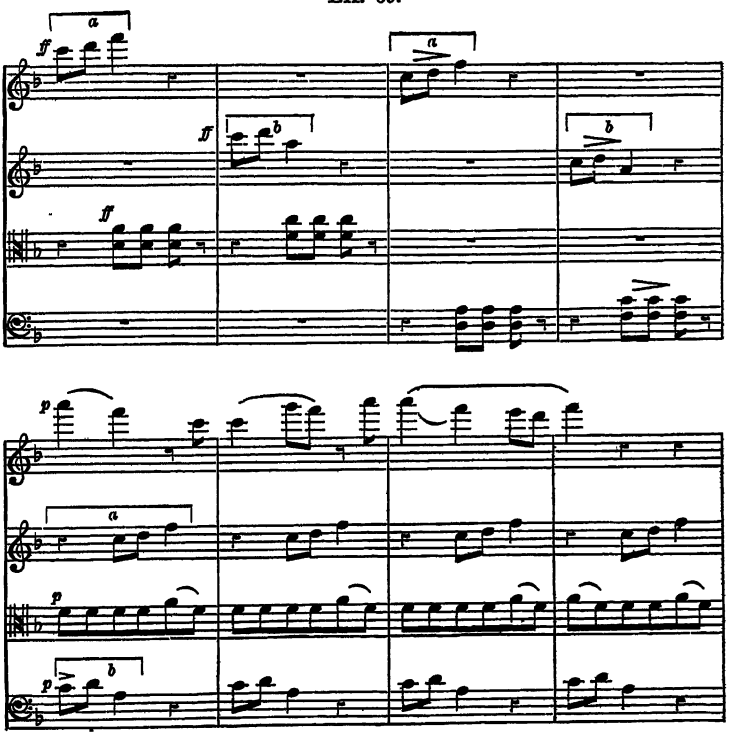
DVOŘÁK, QUARTET IN F, OP. 96.

We have in the first few bars of each the same *pianissimo* movement in sixths by the two violins, giving the key chord; the same holding note on the 'cello, forming a pedal-bass; a similar space of silence for the viola, and a similar trumpet-like entry at the end of the rest. But here the similarity ends. Dvořák's viola theme is short and concise and quite suitable to the medium; the accompanying semiquavers change their position after two bars, and a little later the first violin makes a pretty little bird-like swoop before taking up the viola melody and carrying it aloft. The very long dramatic tune of Smetana and the continued waving figure, almost unbroken for dozens of bars, are distinctly orchestral in feeling and much less satisfactory in a chamber work. Let us also compare the treatment of the 'cello part. In Smetana we find merely a long monotonous pedal bass without any rhythmical importance whatever. In Dvořák, after a few bars of the movement, the 'cello part becomes broken up into *pizzicato*, while the first violin has the melody. After ten bars we have such characteristic quartet-writing as the following:—

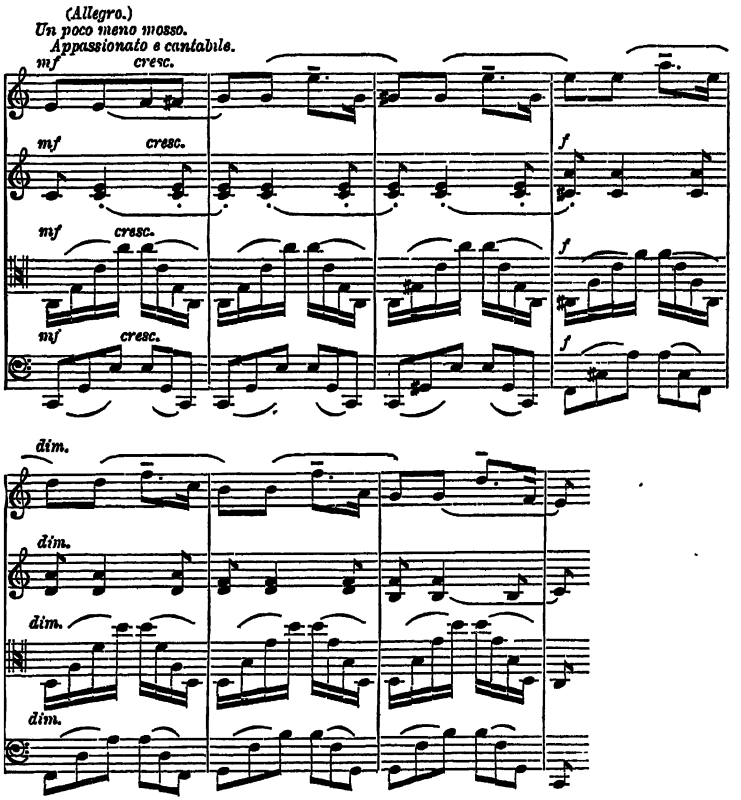
EX. 66.

In justice to Smetana, however, and lest the student should derive a contrary impression from that intended by the author in instituting the foregoing comparisons, it should be said that the "Aus Meinem Leben" quartet is avowedly an experiment in dramatic programme-music in the form of a chamber work. Thus, while we condemn the choice of medium, it must in all fairness be conceded that some striking effects are obtained which may profit us (as they also most evidently

profited Dvořák), and that on other pages of the same composition there are some refreshing instances of novel invention, the structure being quite legitimate, and the feeling not at all orchestral.

EX. 67.

The excellences embodied in this quotation will be readily and quickly seen. Let us note the effectiveness of the melody with its quiet counter-subject on the second violin, the delicate grace of the consistent viola figure, and the pretty rhythm entrusted to the 'cello. We shall no longer doubt that Smetana understood his art well enough to hand on to his more famous pupil some stimulating methods and principles worthy of close study and emulation. In this connection it may not be amiss to quote a few more bars from the Quartet in F of Dvořák, showing to what a high stage of perfection this combination of melody and rhythmic resource may be brought. The Scherzo of this work begins in a manner which arrests attention immediately.

EX. 68.

This subject, stated, as will be seen, by second violin and 'cello in octaves, is treated in a remarkably spirited and independent way, the whole movement resembling a dialogue in which each participator has witty things to say. To begin with, the final three notes of each of these two-bar phrases (*a* and *b*) are seized upon as separate figures, and then employed with great skill as part of an accompaniment for a melody on the E string of the first violin, as the following extract will show:—

EX. 69.

Before passing on to consider the claims of other matters, space must be allowed for three more illustrations, for it is necessary for us to observe the most modern and advanced methods of dealing with the question of melody and accompaniment. The first two are illustrative of the great sonority and passionate sweep of sound that a fine craftsman can obtain from slender means. They are both from the same quartet, No. 1 in A, by the Russian composer, Borodin.

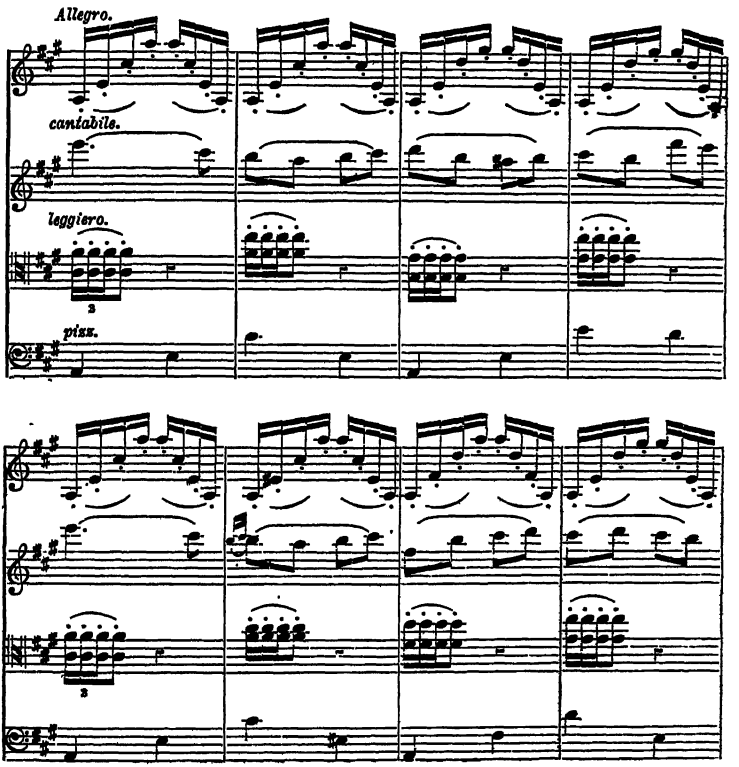
EX. 70.

This, with all its freedom, is pure quartet music, obviously conceived for the medium in which it is written. The

expressive and eagerly passionate strains of the first violin part are well supported by the pulsation of the second violin chords, whilst the passages crossing the strings for viola and 'cello (the groups of four in the former combined with the triplet groups of the latter) blend together with striking effect.

Despite the mass of sound obtained there is a little suggestion of orchestral writing here, each individual part having a certain 'solo' character.

The following passage, of somewhat similar calibre, occurs in the same movement of the same quartet, and, being equally resourceful and fanciful, will repay careful analysis:—

EX. 71.

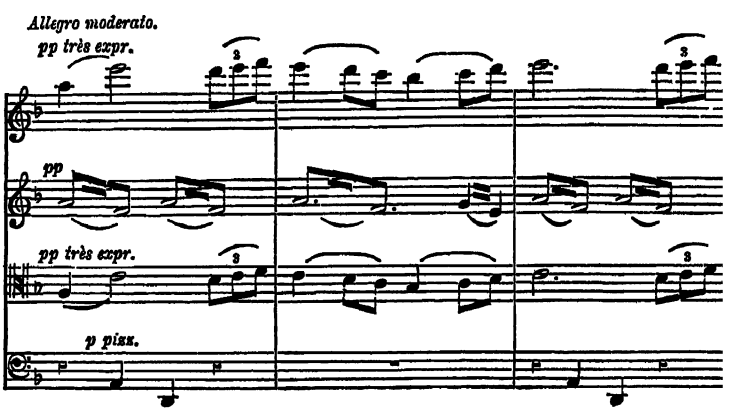
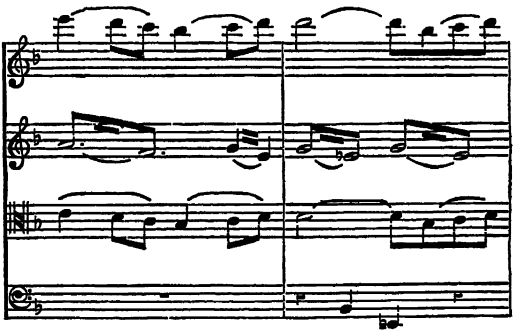


Each separate part is distinctive here, and piquancy is given to the accompaniment by the *pizzicato* of the 'cello and the little tremulous figure assigned to the viola. It may also be noted as a good instance of an important solo passage on the E string of the second violin. The kind of writing that these two extracts display may be considered somewhat highly spiced; they are, of course, exceptional instances—not set forth as models of what every bar might contain, but as suggestions of what, at moments of climax or tension, may be actually attained to without losing the sense either of fitness or proportion.

While the tendency of late in Germany and Russia has been to increase the sonority of Chamber Music—and, one might say, to make it sound more than it is—in other quarters there have been signs that it may be looked upon as something most slender and delicate, and entrusted only with the expression of elusive and shadowy thoughts of which the orchestra might be too clumsy an interpreter.

The following five bars from the Quartet in F by the French composer, Ravel, give an interesting example of a totally different melodic treatment:—

EX. 72.



This possesses that precious quality known as 'atmosphere,' though the whole quartet is disfigured, as in so many modern French works, by the irritating mannerism which takes the form of insisting on the repetition of each phrase rather than its continuity.

It is tinted rather than coloured—we hear it, as it were, through gauze which obscures the outlines and makes us lose all sense of strength and stability. To those who would prefer their music to be a reflection of shadows rather than substance, a pale symbol rather than a bold actuality, the study of this quartet will be most valuable, for it is very beautiful and very finished, and is welded together with a most subtle and delicate touch.

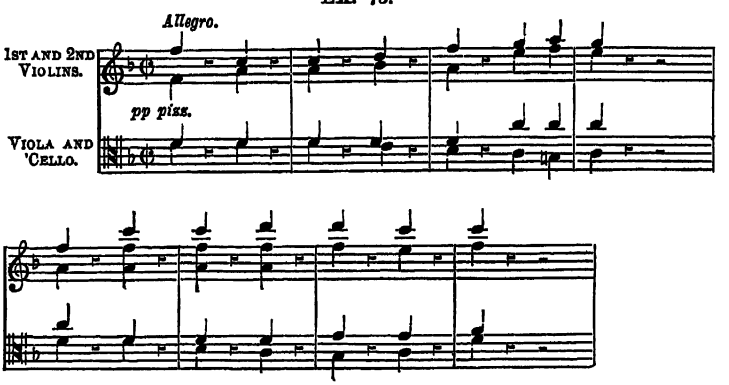
Before closing this chapter an attempt must be made to consider certain special effects which may be utilised to lend variety and colour to the quartet combination.

Several musical examples on previous pages give, incidentally, passages marked *pizzicato* (abbreviated to *pizz.*), an Italian indication meaning, literally, 'pinched.' The 'pinching' or plucking of the strings may be employed in Chamber Music in a number of ways. Violinists generally play *pizzicato* passages with one finger, and it is necessary to remember that an extremely rapid succession of notes played in this way is not practical. The quality of tone produced is a little thin especially in high notes, which seldom sound satisfactory in *pizzicato* passages. The problem of balance has also to be faced—the 'cello *pizzicato* notes are of a richer quality than

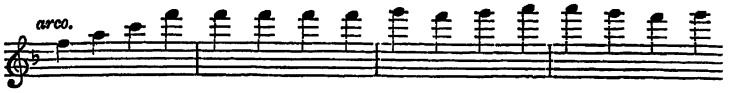
those of the violin or viola, and, having a greater resonance and some slight sustaining power, are not infrequently employed when the other three strings are playing ~~arco, i.e.~~ with the bow.

Interesting examples of varying uses of these devices may be seen on pages 68, 77, 85 and 127.

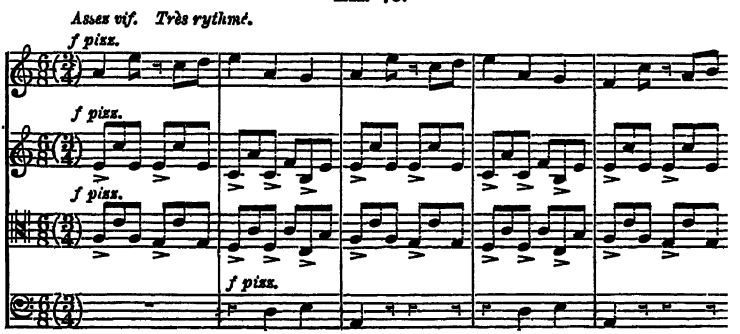
It remains to give some instances in which all of the strings together are instructed to play *pizzicato*. It will not be possible to find many such passages in the works of the earlier writers,[1] but we have evidences in the very last quartets of Beethoven that he realised the special value of this effect.

EX. 73.

The above is a quotation from the final Coda of that strangely capricious and fanciful Quartet in F major, Op. 135. The strings are plucked *pianissimo*, and it may be noted that Beethoven uses high notes on the 'cello rather than the lower more powerful and resonant tones. The pace is quick, and when the first violin in the next few bars plays crotchets in succession in its highest register, they are directed to be played *arco*, the other instruments continuing as before.

[1] There is a good instance of *pizzicato accompaniment* in the Minuet of Mozart's Quartet in D minor (No. 32, Payne). The melody at first is given to the principal violin, and is afterwards shared by the viola in octaves.

EX. 74.

The execution of such a passage *pizzicato* would be impossible and, were it possible, the thin tinny sound of these high notes would sound quite trivial and absurd.

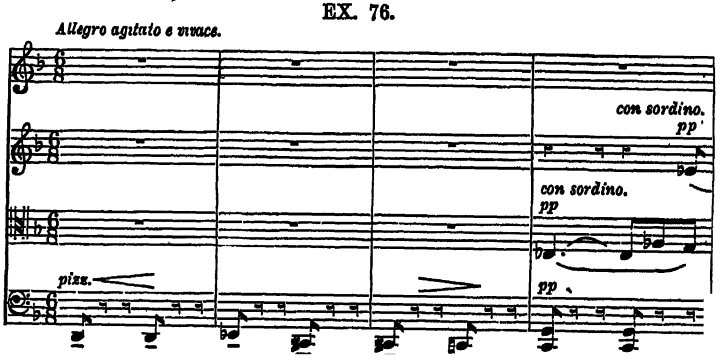
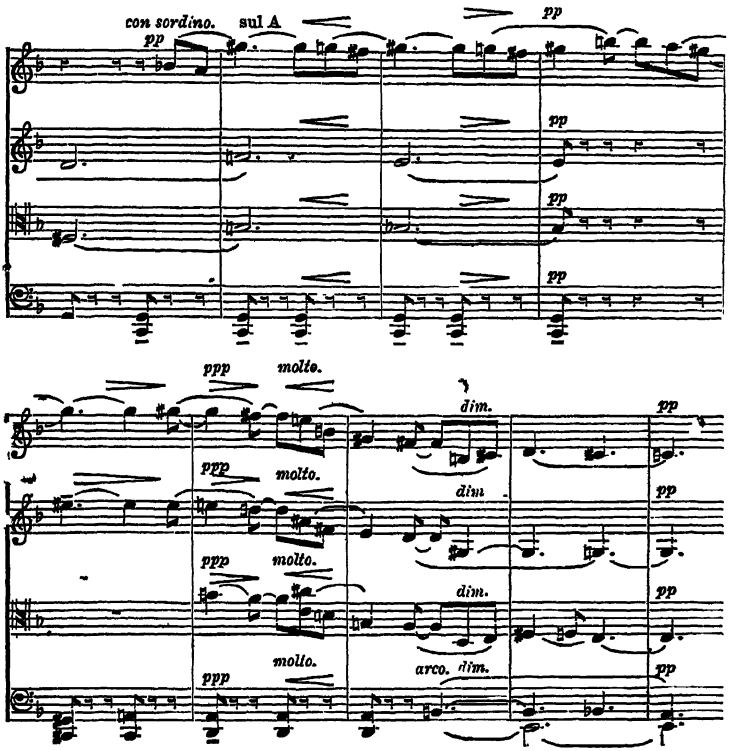
In the quartet of Ravel, from which a quotation has recently been given, may be found a remarkably interesting experiment in rapid *pizzicato* writing, all four instruments being employed. The effect of the cross-accentuation and mingling of rhythms is very bizarre, but must be accounted a decided success, the whole movement being a remarkable *tour de force* in the matter of sheer artistry and the management of well-contrived surprises.

EX. 75.

Another special effect deserving of notice, though its employment is less frequent in Chamber Music than in orchestral writing, is ~~that indicated by the words *con sordino*. Nearly every instrument can be rendered duller in tone by~~ the application of some form of 'mute' partially to prevent the vibrations. The mutes placed upon stringed instruments produce a peculiar veiled quality which is extremely effective for certain definite purposes. The actual 'mute' used by string players is a little clamp, somewhat resembling a comb in shape, made either of metal or wood. It is placed on the bridge of the

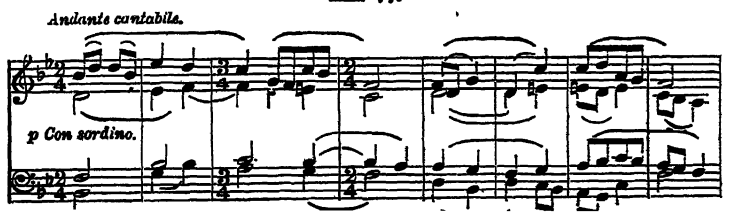
instrument, which it clasps tightly, effectually preventing it from imparting its vibrations to the sound-board, and very perceptibly affecting both the power and quality of the tone. It is generally believed that mutes are a modern invention. But although seldom employed until recent times, the score of a work as early as Purcell's *Fairy Queen* provides an example of the effective use of this now familiar device. It is seldom that mutes should be used for long at a stretch, as the effect they create becomes wearisome if over-prolonged, and it must also be remembered that if they are to be attached to the instruments (or withdrawn) in the course of a movement, sufficient rests must be provided to allow the players to make the change.

There is a general impression, especially with regard to the orchestra, that mutes are less effective on the violoncellos than upon the upper strings, but this is largely owing to the that violoncello players often use mutes which are not heavy enough to change the tone quality appreciably. At the same time there are occasions when the 'cello may, with excellent effect, be left unmuted whilst the upper strings play con sordini, especially when the 'cello is playing *pizzicato*, as the following extract will show. It is part of the Quartet in D minor by Max Reger (Op. 74), and, besides being an illustration of the point in question, is interesting by reason of the extreme modernity of the progressions, and as an example of the most recent treatment of the quartet-combination harmonically.

EX. 76.

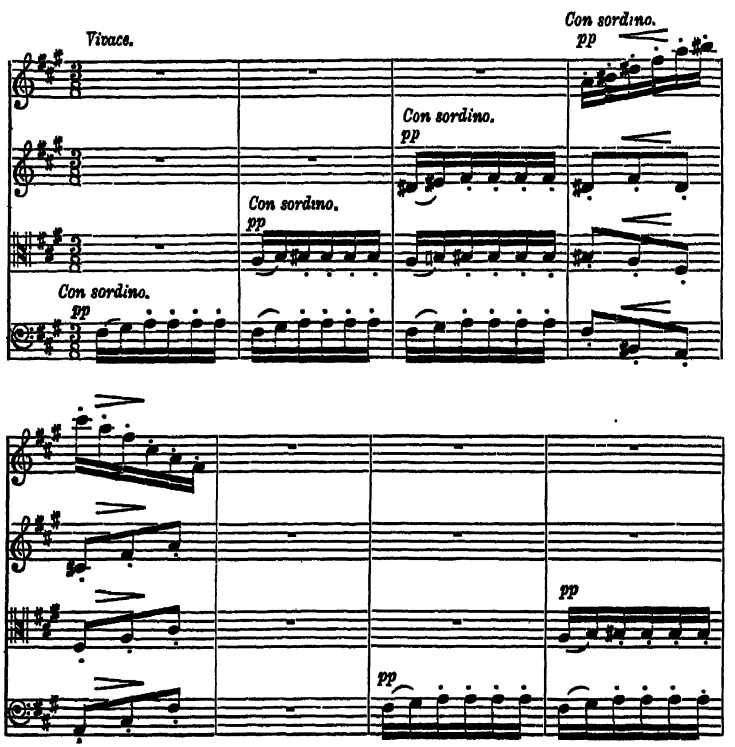


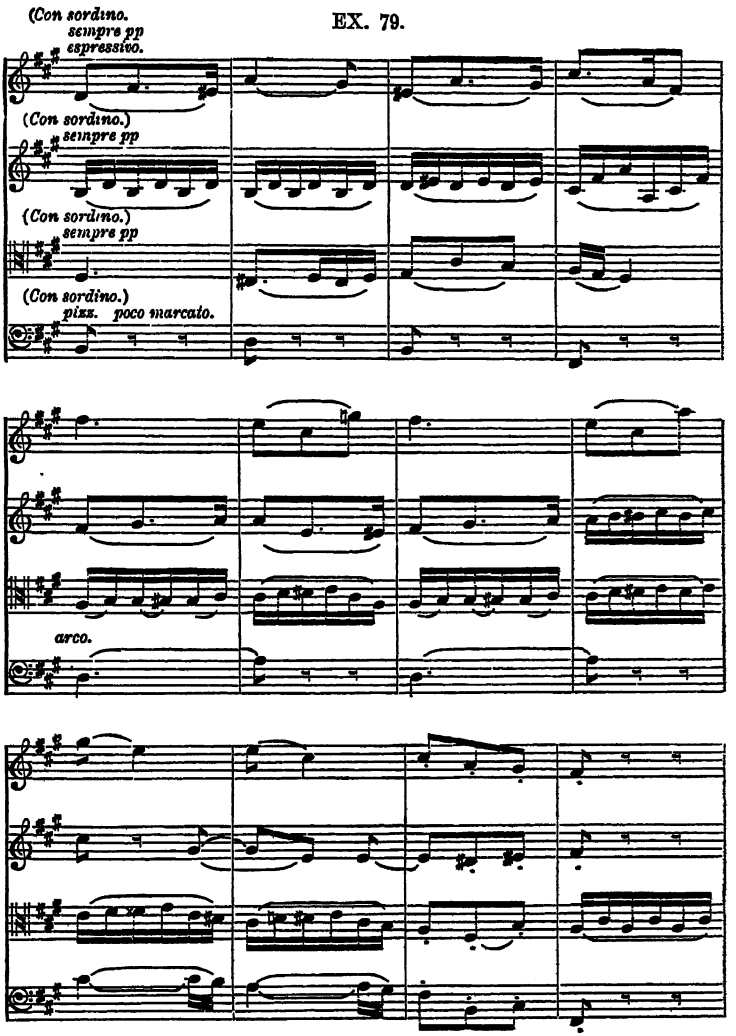
Mutes, producing as they do an impression of remoteness, are more generally used for slow movements in which a veiled and mystic tone is desired. One can recall no better instance of their apt employment than in the exquisite Andante cantabile from Tschaïkowsky's Quartet in D major (Op. 11), in which the tenderly wistful harmonies are rendered far more telling by means of this artificial aid.

EX. 77.

The same movement, in which the mutes are used in all parts from first bar to last, also contains striking instances of a *basso ostinato* played *pizzicato* by the 'cello, and of plucked chords accompanying a warm-toned solo on the G string of the first violin.

The application of mutes will often add a certain sylph-like delicacy to rapid passages requiring extremely dainty treatment.

The following quotations from the Scherzo of César Franck's Quartet in D, almost unknown in this country, will be of interest in this connection:—

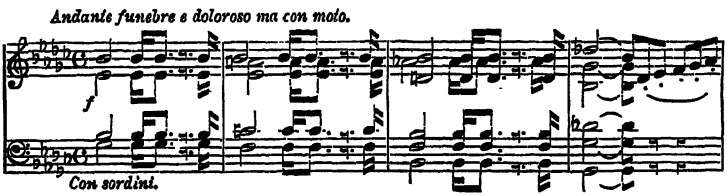
EX. 78.

EX. 79.

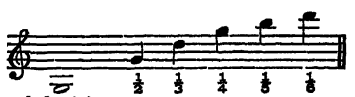


Each of these extracts forms a capital example of the *sordino* judiciously applied, and, since the score of the work from which they are taken is apparently still unpublished, may prove especially valuable to the student. The feathery lightness of the opening—in which a magical effect is gained by constantly

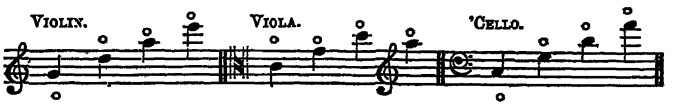
recurring bars of silence—is well followed by the busily accompanied expressive melody, where the whole treatment has a certain sinuous fascination.

A rare effect, and at times a very striking one, is produced by the employment of muted strings for forcible music, as in the ensuing bars from the Quartet in E flat minor (Op. 30) of Tschaïkowsky.

EX. 80.

This device is perhaps less likely to be effective in a string quartet than in the orchestra, or upon a larger number of strings, where the parts can be doubled and strengthened. The harmonies of the above passage, however, are very poignant, and the tone-colouring employed undoubtedly intensifies their emotional import.

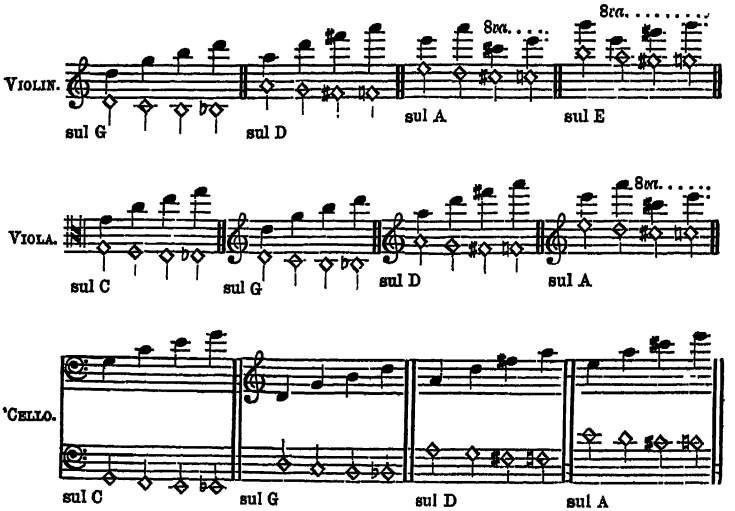
Something must now be said about the use of harmonics in Chamber Music. To study the subject properly the student must have recourse to some scientific treatise dealing with acoustics. It must suffice here to say that harmonics are constituents of the main musical tone and are produced by the vibration of segments of a string, instead of the entire length. A string not only vibrates as a whole, but also in each of its separate fractions, or aliquot parts, at the same time. When it vibrates in halves the note produced is an octave above the fundamental tone, when in thirds a twelfth above, and so on. The only harmonics with which we need ordinarily become acquainted are the first five partial-tones of the series. These are as follows, taking the note G, the fourth string of the violin, as the fundamental tone:—

the fractions below each crotchet indicating the divisions of the string required to produce the note written. A similar series of harmonics can, of course, be produced by any other string, taking the note of the whole open string as the fundamental tone, and building up the series in an exact transposition. It should be understood that all these notes are really produced (with varying strength) whenever the open string is played upon. It is only when we obtain them separately, without the fundamental tone, that the piping flageolet-like notes that we speak of as 'harmonics' are clearly heard. The method of obtaining these notes separately is by a light touch of the finger upon those points, or 'nodes,' at which the string is divided into segments. Thus if a string be lightly touched in the middle it will vibrate in halves, giving the octave above; or if at the distance of a third (from either end) in thirds, giving the twelfth above, and so forth. In addition to these 'natural' harmonics, 'artificial' harmonics are also obtainable by *stopping* the string with the first or second finger, making thus a new fundamental tone, and touching the node with the fourth finger at the same time.

By these two means harmonics, either natural or artificial, can be produced in all scales.

The systems of indicating harmonics in notation are not quite settled or uniform. Some composers, by placing merely an O over the note to be sounded, leave its method of production to the player. In the case of the octave above any open string this is, of course, always sufficient—the finger touching the string in the place where it would be stopped if there were no special indication.

In the case of other natural harmonics it is often wise to indicate the part of the string touched by a minim, or by a note with a diamond-shaped head. The following short table indicates how this may be done, and the actual sounds produced

are given above, in black notes. These actual notes are sometimes, but not always, printed by composers in small type for safety's sake.

NATURAL HARMONICS.

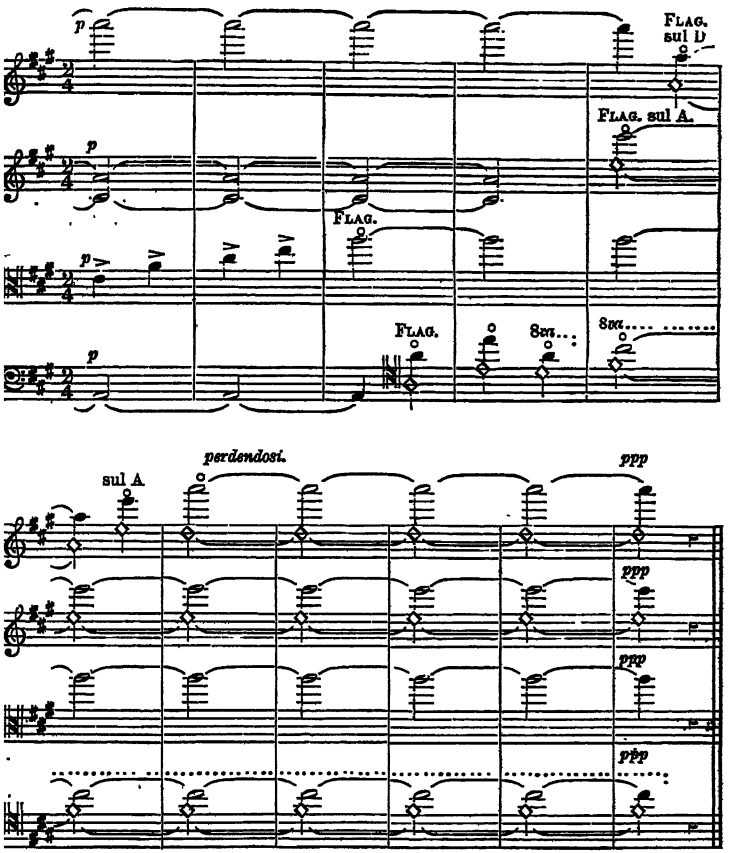


These tables are given for completeness and for reference, and it must not be supposed that all the harmonics indicated are likely to be equally useful or effective. As a matter of actual practice the fractional division of the string into $\frac{1}{6}$ is seldom used, for the resultant note can be more satisfactorily obtained in other ways.

A composer who is not himself a player of a stringed instrument will do well to consult an executant when indulging in any extensive excursions into this domain. The stopped, or artificial, harmonics in particular need a thorough understanding, and it would be very unsafe to write them indiscriminately for the violin, and even more perilous for the viola and 'cello—many positions being obviously impossible on a large fingerboard that might be readily obtainable on a small one. For the most part harmonics are but rarely required in concerted music—partaking as they do, to some extent, of virtuosity—though their use in a few exceptional cases must be admitted to be

imply justified by the results. Generally speaking, a few solated notes played in this manner by the first violin will be nore effective and safe than chords in which all the instruments play harmonics. A noteworthy instance of the latter levice may, however, be given here in order to show how such in effect may be planned and arranged. These are the closing ›ars of the first movement of Borodin's Quartet in A, the ›riginalities of which have already been drawn upon for illus›rating other points of exceptional usage.

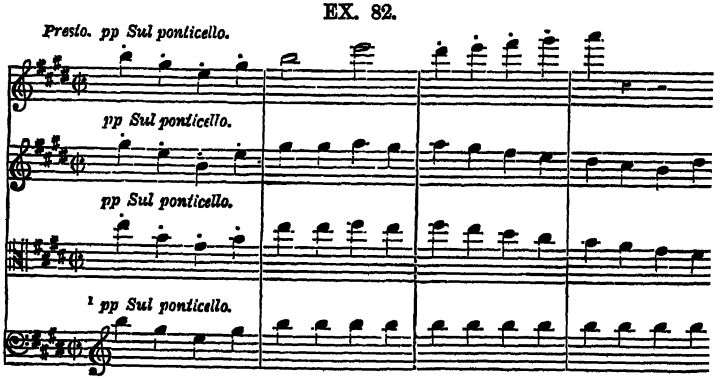
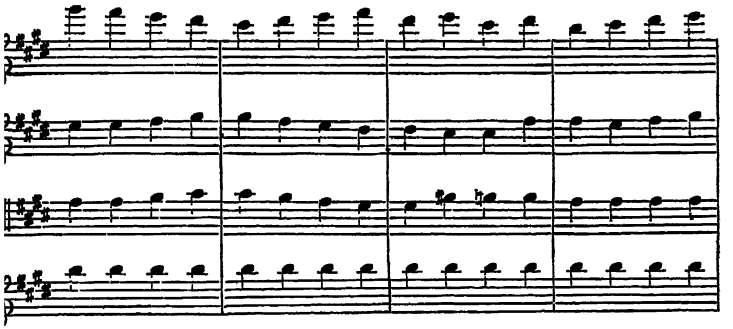
EX. 81.



The direction 'Flag.' is an abbreviated form of the word Flageolet, harmonics always being known by that name in France and Italy.

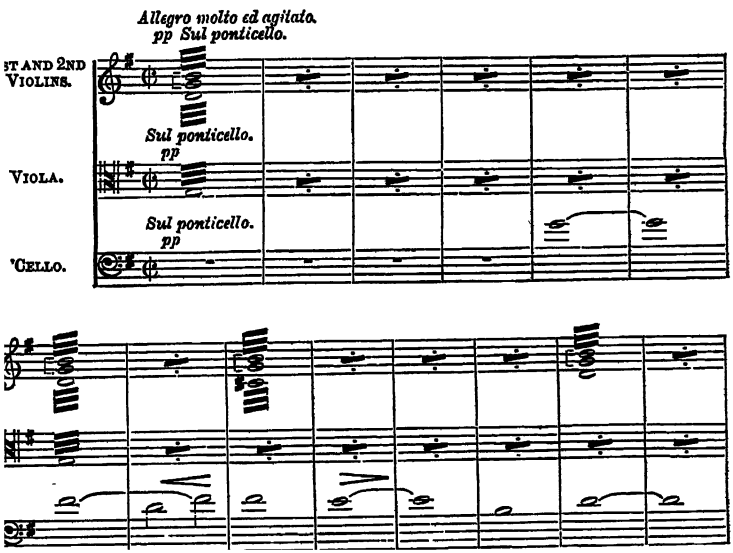
The illustration will be useful to the student if he will discover for himself, from the notation here given, the method by which each harmonic is produced, and at the same time try to realise the sound of the final chord at the pitch indicated.

An effect allied to that under discussion may be made in another way. Harmonics are in reality not only laid bare, so to speak, by this one method of a slight pressure of the fingers on the strings, but may also arise if the player advances the bow from its usual position to a place in very close proximity to the bridge. The sound thus produced is seldom safely attainable on anything but an old and very resonant instrument, and is indicated by the direction *sul ponticello.* No clearly defined overtones are heard, but the vibration of the string is partially stopped, and the fundamental note rendered less strong, a singular 'hissing' quality being the result. Playing *sul ponticello* should only be required by a composer for altogether exceptional purposes. The first known instance of its use in a quartet is in the great posthumous work in C sharp minor by Beethoven (Op. 131), where all four instruments

EX. 82.

[1] Sounds an octave lower than written. Many of the older composers used the treble clef for the 'cello in this way instead of employing the tenor clef. Nowadays the treble clef is only utilised for extremely high passages, when it invariably indicates the actual pitch required.

lay the constantly recurring theme of the Presto in this ıanner towards the end of the movement.

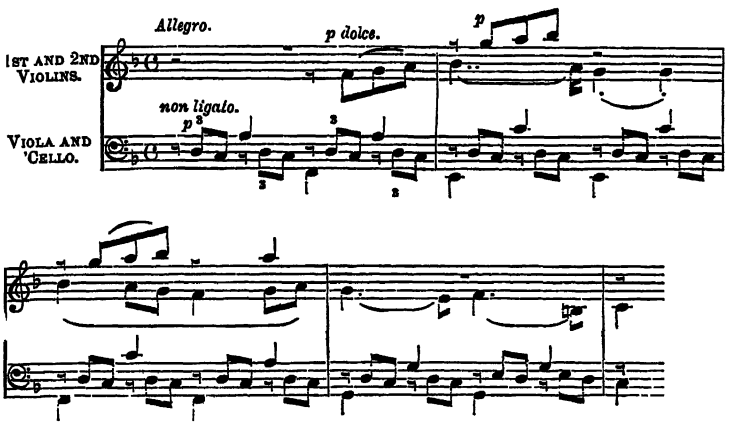
But this is a very brief escapade occurring in the course of ɔ extremely fantastic and capricious composition. In the ɔllowing extract from Grieg's Quartet (Op. 27), we see how nsuitable such a device may become. The *tremolando* treatment, lways dangerous in Chamber Music, only serves to accentuate ıe inappropriateness of the method.

EX. 83.

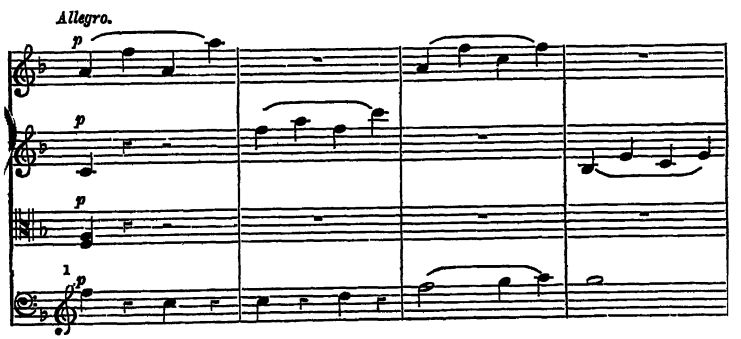
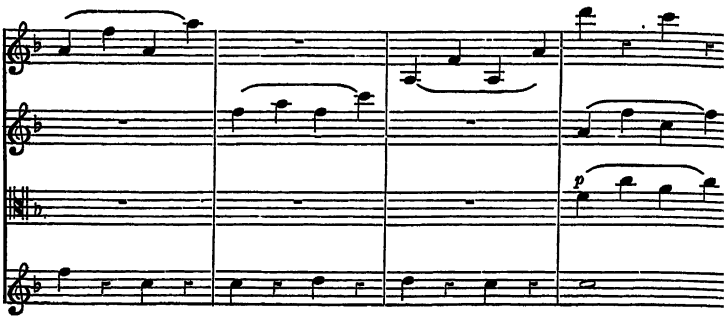


This is a way of composing for String Quartet for which it is difficult to find words strong enough in condemnation: the effect is wholly cheap and meretricious, and reminds one of nothing more forcibly than the abuse of the Vox Humana stop by an inartistic organist.

In concluding the present chapter a few words must be said about the posthumous quartets of Beethoven, which strongly exemplify certain unusual aspects of quartet-writing. It is customary, for want of a better word, to label these last quartets 'obscure.' To a certain extent all emotional absolute music must be obscure, if by that appellation we are to understand that the composer has revealed to us nothing of the actual emotions which were in his mind at its birth. That these strange works, so full of surprises and shadowy questionings are intense expressions of personal feeling one cannot doubt and Beethoven has left us no clue to guide us to their complete understanding, if, as is supposed, they are in a definite sense pictures that might be materially deciphered. On the purely technical side, which is what at the moment concerns us, several new devices are disclosed, some of which are the very reverse of 'effective' in the ordinary sense. The total sound of the quartet is often extraordinarily empty and thin, and we are forced to the conclusion that Beethoven aimed at a suggestion of what was in his mind rather than a real presentation of it. These quartets, in fact, resemble charcoal sketches for paintings too idealistic to be capable of any actual realisation. Beethoven sees, as it were, in the four lines of the string quartet, four voices which may speak to the world his idealistic thoughts. Each voice may be made to speak fully and freely, and may suggest very much more than it is actually capable of uttering: the accumulative result is therefore often more like a skeleton design than a finished work of art. We have only to glance at almost any page of the Quartets in B flat (Op. 130), in C sharp minor (Op. 131), in A minor (Op. 132), and in F major (Op. 135) to see outstanding examples of this method staring us in the face. Who could for one moment suppose that the following is a complete actual representation *in sound* of the composer's ideas?

EX. 84.

Yet here the unfulfilled intention is tolerably clear, the odd phrases of the first violin alone puzzling us, and giving us food for conjecture.

The intention of the following quotation from the F major Quartet (Op. 135) is far less evident, wrapt as it is in a mere network of slight isolated figures which scarcely hold together at all:—

EX. 85.

[1] Sounding an octave lower than written in the 'cello part (see footnote to page 90).

There are, of course, in all these quartets certain pages o full and richly resonant harmonisation, but the most striking moments are often those in which the 'sketch' method here exemplified is deliberately employed. It is doubtful if any composer other than Beethoven could have conceived and carried into successful operation so many wholly perilous experiments in part-writing, and the absence of part-writing At all events, no composer since his time has ever ventured to attempt to tread the same ground, Schumann's quartets alone containing any evidences that this method was capable of being seriously considered by a successor—evidences, however, which are very slight, and as often as not mere attempts to express in quartet-music ideas more suitable for another medium. With the posthumous quartets of Beethoven we do not feel that any other medium is possible, even when we are bound to admit, as often we are, that the four strings are quite incapable of fully presenting the matter in hand.

The sketch treatment is legitimate, however, and should therefore be studied by every composer, who will, by hearing these quartets, learn of what deep mysteries music may be compounded. It can hardly be imitated, for although in Beethoven's hands it enshrined some of the most precious of all the world's masterpieces, in the hands of a composer on a lower plane of intellectuality and soul-development, it would be likely to reveal only too clearly the weakness or insufficiency of the primal ideas it was intended to indicate.

Safer models for the student may be found in the great

Rasoumowsky quartets, perfect examples of a style of writing which has never been superseded, and in the larger works of Schubert in this form, which are, in themselves, clear evidences that much that is new may be satisfactorily built up upon a structure that only failed to suffice for Beethoven himself in his latest years. We may look upon the great posthumous quartets of Beethoven as we would view some unexplorable ranges of distant mountain-peaks, content that we may see in their beautiful outlines some suggestions of their immensity and grandeur, and knowing that, were we brought into close touch with them, our vision could not at the same time comprehend that perfection of curve and colour that enthrals us as we gaze, and gives us what seems to be a glimpse of the unattainable and the Eternal.

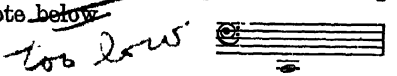
CHAPTER IV.

THE STRING QUARTET.

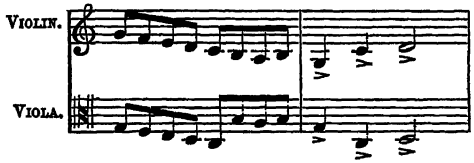
III.

Counsels and Warnings.

In this, the final, chapter dealing with the String Quartet, an attempt will be made to give some parting words of counsel and warning. If the composer accustoms himself to "think quartet" (to use an awkward but expressive phrase of the late Professor Prout), he will find that many of his difficulties will automatically vanish at once. It is highly necessary that music should always be directly conceived for the instruments which are going to perform it. A pianoforte arrangement of an orchestral piece, however good it may be, is always an arrangement and can never be pure pianoforte music. Similarly, if a composer, when writing for string quartet, is constructing something which he hears in his mind as a piece that his two hands can render upon the piano, he is, perhaps unconsciously, making a *transcription* which can never—even though it be written direct upon his four-lined score—have the fresh inevitableness of an inspired creation. Part of the faculty of "thinking quartet" is, of course, the training of one's mind never to desire anything unattainable upon the four instruments. A note below



for instance, simply must not exist in the writer's consciousness, and if he finds himself writing a scale passage for the violin and viola in octaves which cannot keep its position undisturbed,

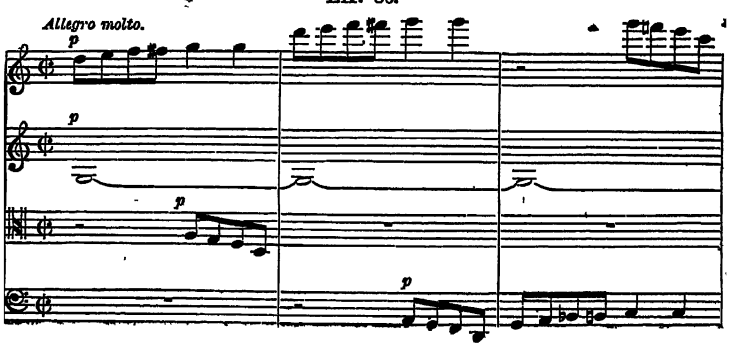
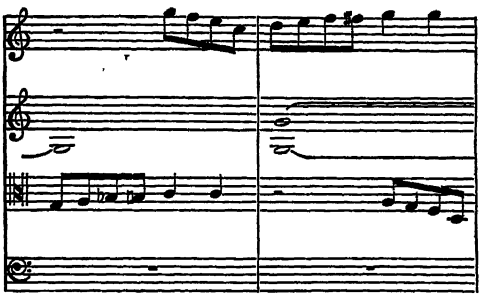
it is a sure proof that, not having thoroughly mastered his material, he is working on the wrong lines.

Such passages as the above occur frequently in orchestral music, but in a quartet they are quite inadmissible, for every part is clearly heard. To expose the limitations of one's machinery is to confess one's own weakness as an artist. Again, the actual tone of the strings must be constantly in what might be called the 'mind's ear,' and not only the general quality of this tone but the special differences in power which occur when the instruments play in various parts of their compass. A solo melody on the violoncello, for instance, if placed too low in pitch will perhaps lack the strength and song-like prominence necessary, and will easily be overpowered, or at least obscured, by the instruments which accompany it. Questions of this sort are constantly arising in works written in sonata-form, where themes re-appear in different keys. It is seldom satisfactory to transpose a second subject first given on the 'cello a fifth downwards in the recapitulation: it is almost always desirable to reconstruct the whole plan of distribution, giving the melody on its second appearance to a violin or viola and altering the accompaniment. Instances of these changes may be found in almost any good quartet.

A student composing a quartet for the first time is very liable to tumble into a way of writing which might be described as scrappy. His parts will perhaps consist of a collection of short disconnected phrases with no smooth thread holding them together. This defect may be due to several causes. As likely as not he has neglected to phrase his music, or, if not, he has indicated many changes of bow where a few long slow strokes would have ensured smoothness and an effect of continuity. Nothing of this kind should be left to chance, or to the discretion of a player who may possibly have no discretion at all

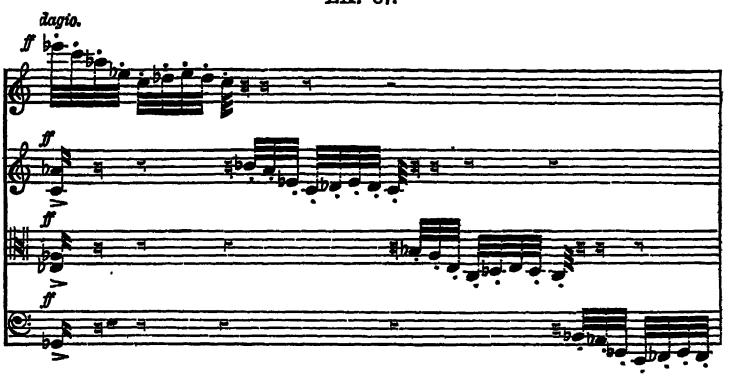
It is of the utmost importance to mark phrasing completely and exactly in one's score; and even though a good player may sometimes find other bowings than those marked better adapted to produce the phrasing indicated, if he has the indications clearly set forth he will not be likely, in making his changes, to misinterpret the composer's ideas. For phrasing is not quite the same as bowing, and a good violinist, particularly in rendering a very long slurred passage, will often change the bow without making a break, just as he may, in short phrases, make a break without changing the bow. But if a passage has no phrasing marks at all, the player will invariably play each note with a separate bow.

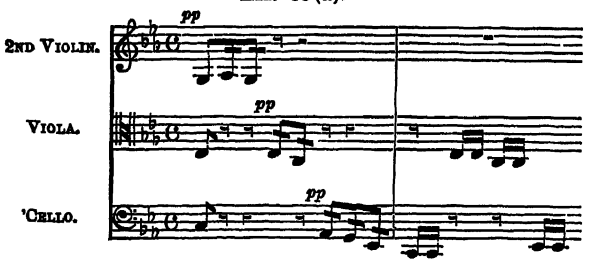
To a good composer "thinking quartet," the phrasing, and even the bowing, will be as much a part of the original conception as the notes themselves, and he will no more neglect to add slurs and staccato marks to his music than he will neglect to add tails to his quavers and semiquavers.

Sometimes, even if the music may be well phrased, a certain scattered effect is still evident. It is often possible to give coherence to a few disjointed phrases by employing a holding note, which, as it were, fastens the whole fabric together. The following passage from the third Rasoumowsky Quartet of Beethoven is an admirable instance of this. It is clearly a foreshadowing of the 'sketch' treatment of the posthumous works in conception, but the G on the second violin binds the disjointed phrases together, filling the place that a horn so often fills in orchestration under similar circumstances. There are no slurs here, every note being played with a separate bow.

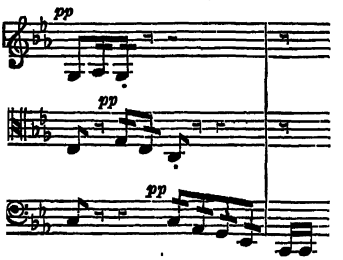
EX. 86.

The danger of falling into a scrappy, disconnected style is even greater when a composer is constructing passages which deliberately pass from one instrument to another, forming a continuous chain.

Such a passage as the following (from a Quartet in C minor by Joseph Jongen) is, to say the least, risky, and is not likely to be easy of performance, or to sound quite satisfactory even if the instruments are very well balanced.

EX. 87.

The result will be even more conjectural if the composer does not finish the portions of the phrase allotted to each instrument on the accents or beats of the bar. Too strong a faith in the quartet as an exactly balanced tone-combination has led many composers into palpable errors of judgment. Let us take a passage at random from Volkmann's Quartet in F minor, Op. 37.

EX. 88 (a).

Volkmann's quartets abound in chains of notes of this kin and there is general evidence that uniformity of tone was t him the most important characteristic of the combination, an that he expected more uniformity than it is humanly possib for the four players to attain. The very same passage woul suffer nothing and gain much were it arranged as follows :—

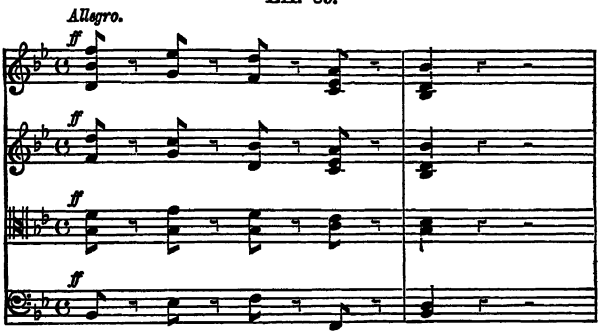
EX. 88 (b).



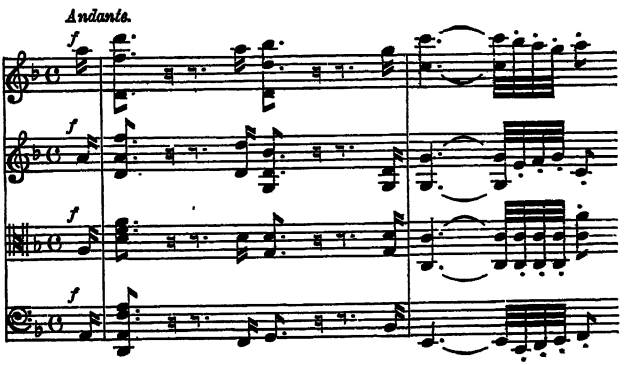
—a species of workmanship which may be described as 'dov tailing.' It is interesting to observe that even Beethoven, a work as late as the third Rasoumowsky quartet (Minue indulges in a somewhat similar unwise distribution, which very rarely successful in performance, however skilful an evenly matched the players may be.

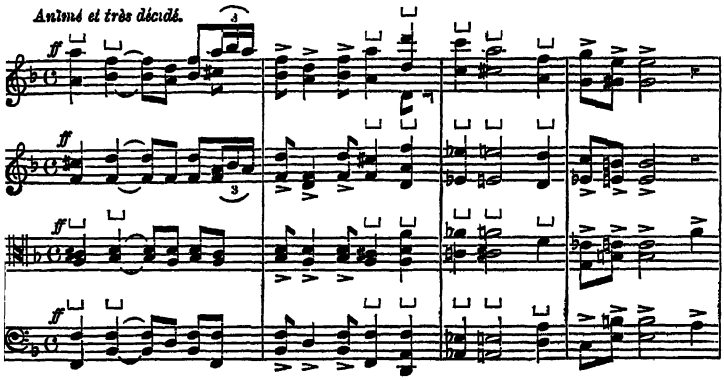
~~Up to the present little has been said upon the question~~ the use of double notes and chords for each instrument, order to obtain greater rhythmic force and accentuation. modern days the tendency to employ such means in a quart to give greater sonority or grip, and to assist in making t climax more striking, has greatly increased. But the ear

writers were by no means ignorant of the device, the fact that they used it but seldom showing, not that they disapproved, but that they looked upon it as an addition to their armoury seldom needed. Even one of Haydn's quartets begins in this forceful and flourishing style,

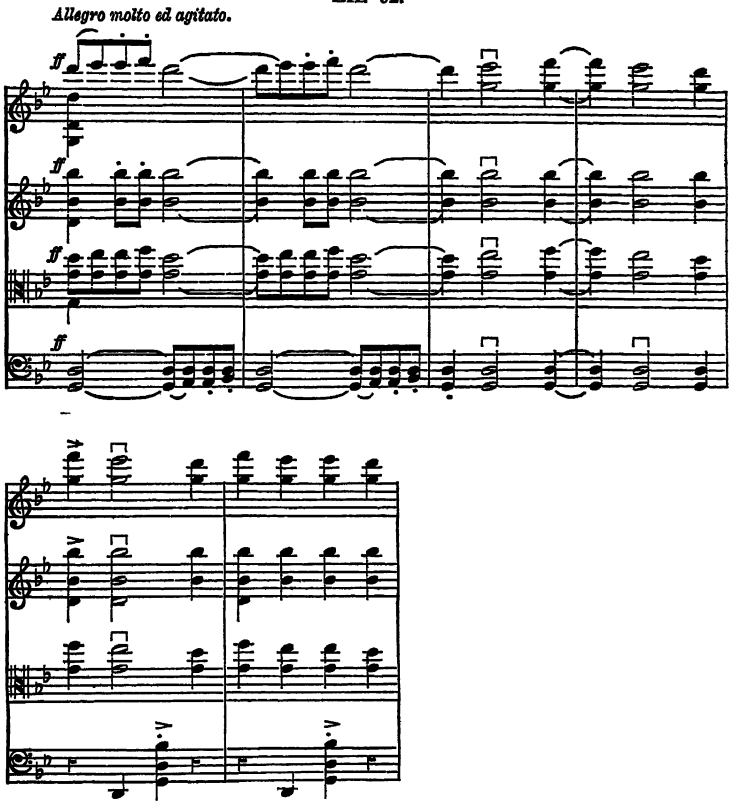
EX. 89.

showing that the old master neither scorned nor underrated the effect obtainable in this way.

It is, of course, possible to obtain, by means of sharp chords played upon all the instruments, an effect of great massiveness and emphasis. This forcible passage, for example, coming in the midst of the prevailing quietude of the context, is almost dramatic in its suddenness. The quotation is from the Andante in Brahms' Quartet in B flat, Op. 67.

EX. 90.

Less spasmodic and more sustained effects of strength may be obtained by the use of double notes *forte* on all the instruments, as in the ensuing example, from Debussy's Quatuor (first movement):—

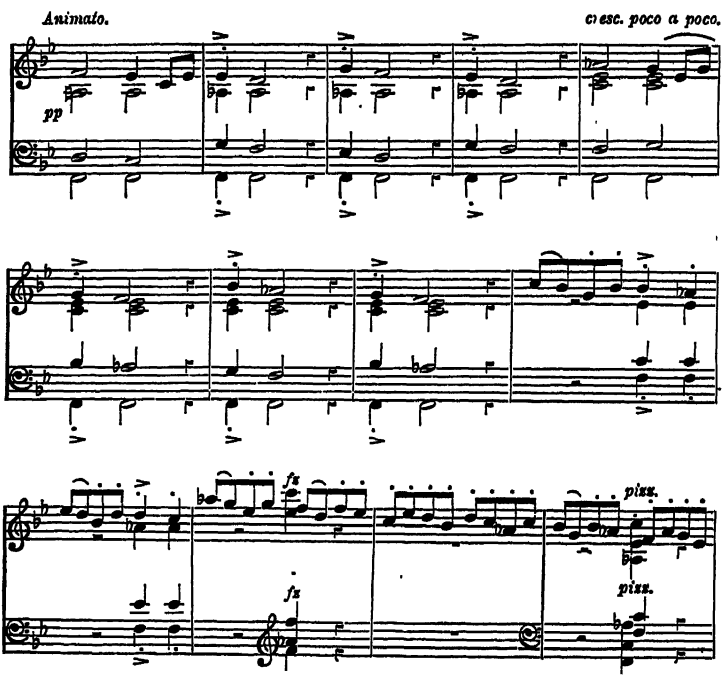
EX. 91.

These evidences are set forth in order to show how skilfully chords and double notes may be employed, but it cannot be too strongly urged that they exemplify a kind of writing only of use in exceptional places. A quartet overcrowded with effects of this nature would be open to the charge of bad and unsuitable writing for the combination, and would, moreover, be extremely monotonous and tiresome to listen to—just as an orchestral composition in which the full brass blazed forth without cessation would be an extremely bad example of instrumentation, lacking in the saving grace of contrast. If we look at the rest of the movement by Debussy, of which the climax alone is quoted here, we shall see with what wonderful art he has introduced this intense rhythmic force. No modern composer has a larger or surer sense of the immense value of such passages, precisely because of the fact that he uses them infrequently, and thereby gives them their fullest significance when they do occur.

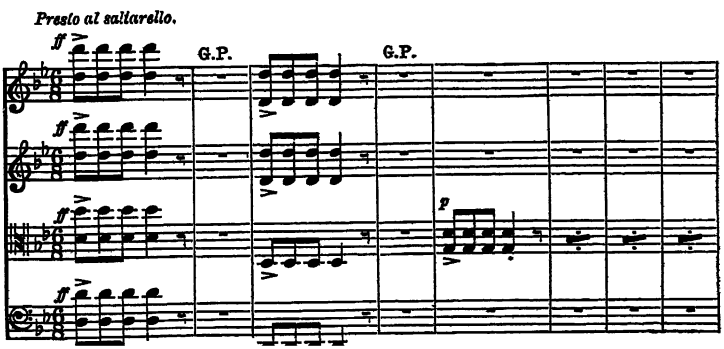
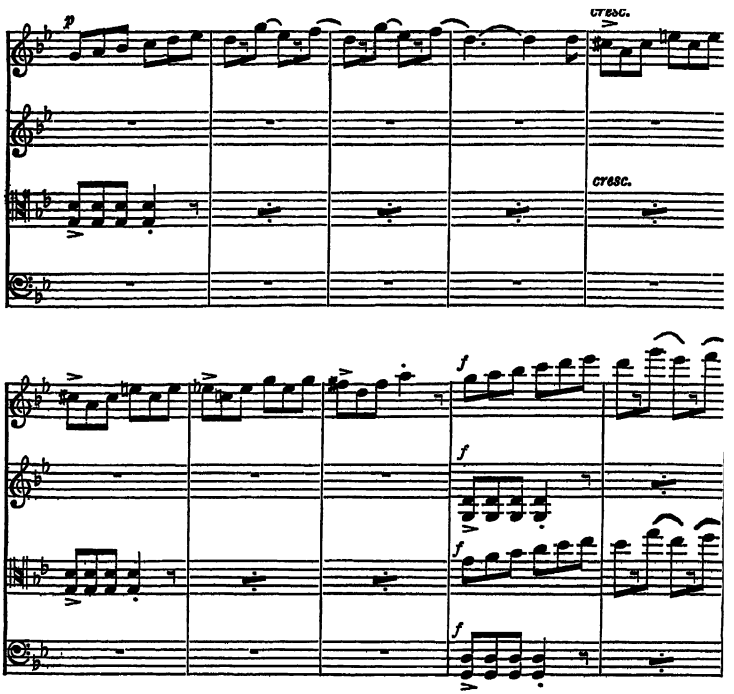
As an example of the abuse of this method of quartet-writing perhaps nothing more pertinent could be cited than this terrific procession of crashing chords, from the Quartet in G minor of Grieg.

EX. 92.

Grieg was a composer of much picturesque and strongly national music; he had a very sure touch, and knew and obtained exactly what he wanted. But in his quartet he unfortunately wanted the wrong kind of thing, and the great skill by which he made these four gentle stringed instruments create a perfect riot of sensuous sound, and compelled them to play double stoppings in almost every bar, only serves to impress upon us the magnitude of the dangers that beset those who are clever enough to achieve a *tour de force* by inartistic and inappropriate means.

A passage from the same work (with 'sul ponticello' tremolo accompaniment) was quoted in the last chapter as an instance of injudicious writing, and may be recalled in this connection.

It is a fair example of a type of music not only orchestral in feeling but lacking in any meaning whatever apart from its association with masses of colour. If an attempt is made to place this kind of writing upon four stringed instruments, it must be assumed that the listener knows the effect it *might* make if played upon an orchestra, and mentally conceives a colouring and sonority which is actually not there at all. In an orchestral piece steady insistence upon clear outlines, with no changes of chord-positions, and no detailed interest in the separate parts, may be not only a tolerable, but, under certain circumstances, a necessary method of creating a sense of broad proportions and great expanse. It need not even be dependent upon any particular colour for its effect. Such a passage as the following might be scored in several different ways:—

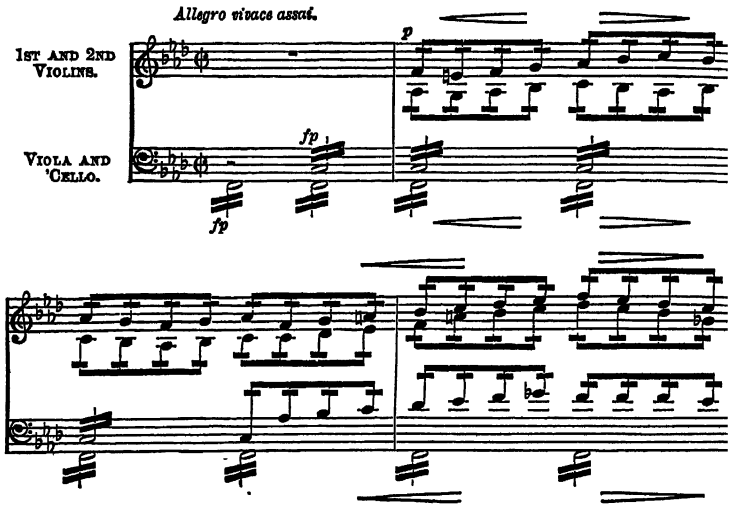
EX. 93.

But however it was scored it would depend for its effect upon (i) the especial clearness of the melody, (ii) the unity of the chord-repetitions and the fact that they are repetitions, (iii) a very great accumulation of power in the *crescendo*, and (iv) an absolute difference in tone colour in the last five bars between the melody and the chords which support it. Now, as a matter of fact, the passage occurs, just as it stands, in the Grieg quartet, and forms one of the worst examples of Chamber Music it is possible to give; for, of the four essentials noted, one cannot be attained at all, one is only capable of being suggested, and one is an example of what is undesirable in Chamber Music. Even the solitary quality which survives as both possible and desirable—the clearness of the melody—is likely to suffer very greatly if the other points are sufficiently attended to. Quite apart from all these considerations, if there is one form of musical construction which is more unsuitable in a quartet than any other, it is the breaking up of melodies into square blocks or divisions, which admit of no flow or independence of part-writing, and invariably sound stiff and wooden. In addition to this one simply cannot tolerate a standard of taste in Chamber Music which allows endless facile repetitions of quite ordinary figures with nothing more than an elementary rhythmic interest. In a word, one must utterly condemn anything which is merely flimsy and tawdry. Let us inspect one more passage from this much-abused Grieg quartet—the opening of the final *Presto al saltarello.*

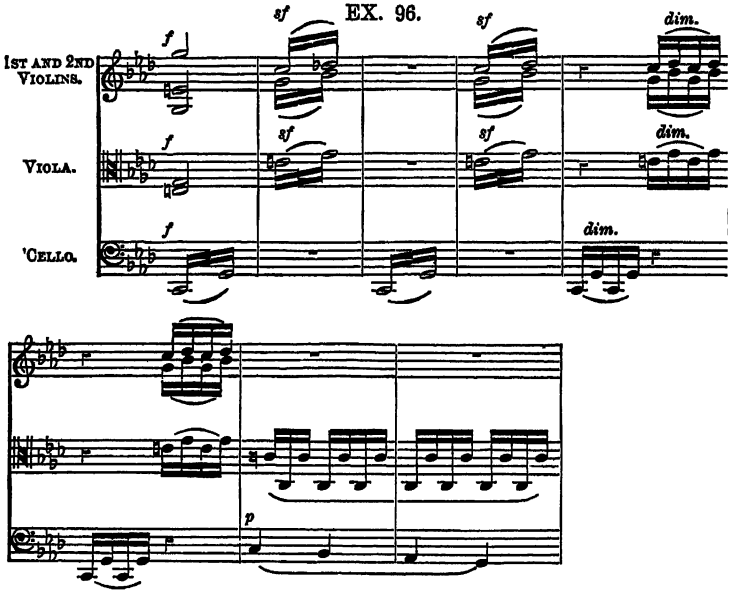
EX. 94.

This is very merry and very gay, but it is not Chamber Music—it is, indeed, about as far from being Chamber Music as it is possible for any music to be. One does not want to be pedantic or to exclude anything which has merit from one's appreciative survey, but there is a certain dignity to be upheld in dealing with the string-quartet form, and such an unbridled explosion as that quoted above seems almost like an outrage and cannot fail to excite resentment. There is absolutely no excuse for setting forth music to be played by four trained and sensitive musicians which could as well be interpreted by the average fiddlers of a restaurant ~~or a beer-garden. Moreover,~~ this kind of music would be far better appreciated by the audience likely to be present at such places than by the listeners at a Chamber Concert, whose ears are generally attuned to more seriously considered ~~and less evanescent~~ things.

The vehemence of this protest has only one purpose—to save the would-be composer from the greatest danger that besets him when he approaches quartet-writing. Even if he does not so grossly misunderstand the function of Chamber Music as to write comic-opera dances for four strings, he may yet wander far enough astray, and mar his conceptions with idioms and formulae borrowed from other, and alien, musical paths. These warnings will not be needed by the writer who has already learned to "think quartet," but there will be some who will not have fallen on their feet all at once, and others who may imagine that they have attained that stage of development when they are in reality still cramping their ideas in order to squeeze them on to four small instruments. It is very important that the composer, to use a happy expression of Sir George Grove's, should not place his work in too small a frame. Several great composers, successful in other spheres, have failed in quartet-writing because they have written music which virtually requires an orchestra of strings instead of four solo players. Such music is not necessarily overladen with chords and double stoppings, though the presence of these devices is often a sign that the composer is thinking orchestrally. It may be quite suitably arranged, and conceived in four parts, and yet the *character* of the music is at once orchestral in feeling, and one instinctively feels a lack of power and volume of tone, when hearing it performed. This was especially the case with Mendelssohn.

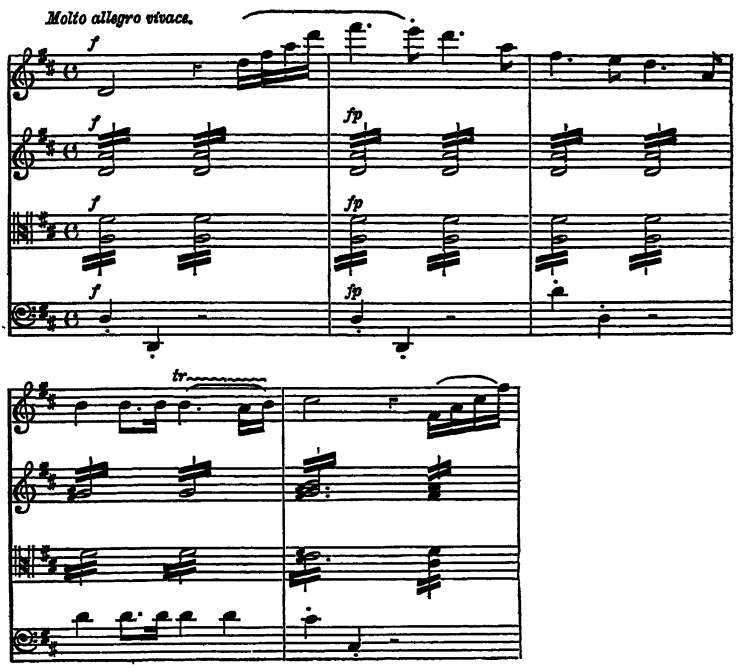
The compositions of Mendelssohn, valued at their fullest during the middle years of the nineteenth century, have of late suffered so unjustly from depreciatory criticism that one does not willingly single out his work for condemnation. But it must be admitted that this refined composer, whose judgment and taste were so rarely at fault, does not show to advantage in his string quartets, and there are passages in them which may, perhaps, be aptly quoted amongst the examples of what should not be written in Chamber Music. Let us glance at two brief extracts from the Quartet in F minor, Op. 80—the first from the opening Allegro, and the second from the Finale.

EX. 95.



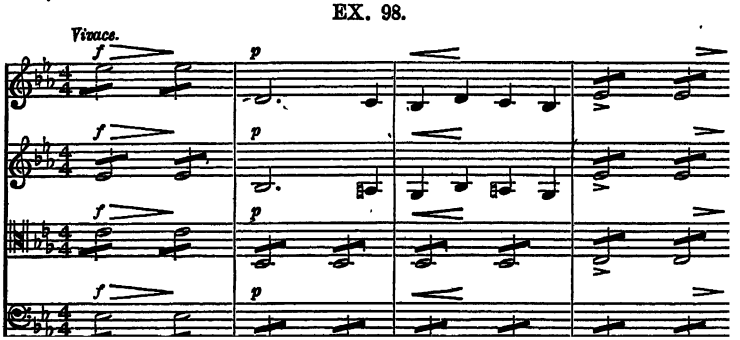
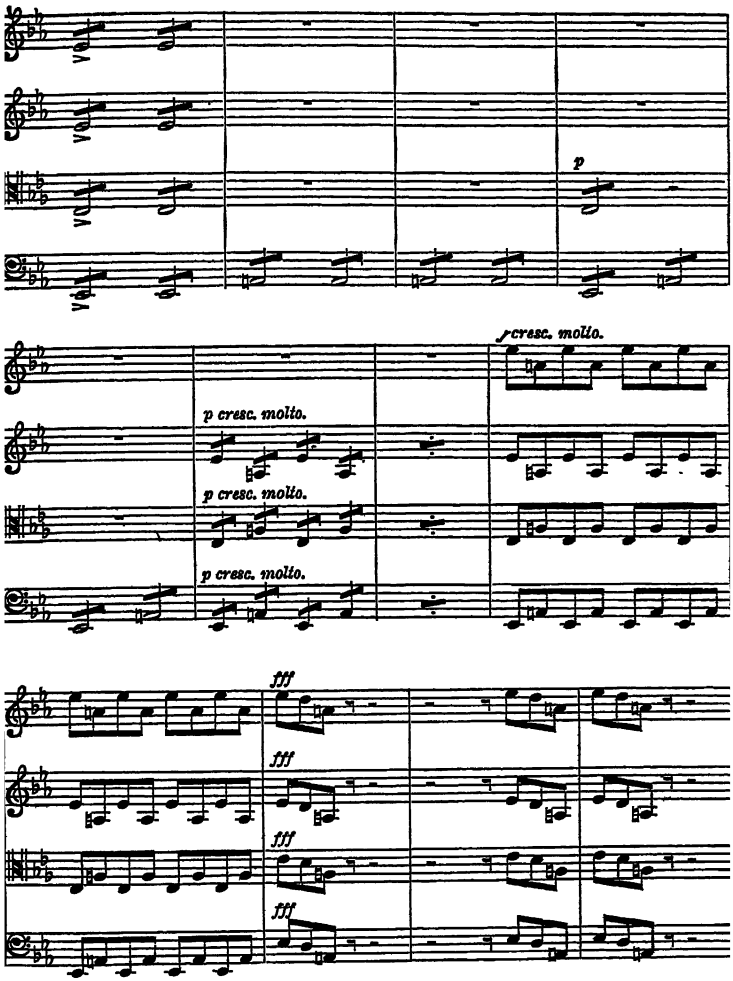
EX. 96.

The first of these examples, with its rapidly repeated notes resembling a tremolando, is obviously a misconception. for it

savours almost of a 'mélodrame' accompaniment to a recitation, and virtually possesses no justification for a separate existence. The second example is even more strikingly inappropriate, and seems imperatively to demand orchestral colour. It would be ever so much more effective if the 'cello part were shared with the drums, if the strings were doubled and divided into several parts, and if two horns were to hold an octave C in the last two bars. This is, of course, what one ought not to feel: the absolute sufficiency of the four strings should always be demonstrated, and if such a demonstration is not possible it would be better to start the work all over again, scoring it for those instruments which its peculiar characteristics require. There are many other passages in Mendelssohn's quartets which contain similar warnings, and which may, in this sense, be profitable for the student to observe. It will suffice to quote one more example—the opening of the Quartet in D, Op. 44, No. 1.

EX. 97.

This is a fine, buoyant and breezy subject, but it seems to cry out for different treatment. Not only are the semiquaver chords inappropriate, but the tune itself demands a mass of violins to give it its true colouring. Let us recall for one moment the somewhat similar opening of the same composer's Italian Symphony, and we shall see how admirably Mendelssohn might have made this equally happy opening passage sound had he given it the setting that must surely have been in his 'mind's ear' at the time of its first conception. There is some highly effective contrapuntal writing in the movement, and the music throughout is interesting, despite the impression one is forced to form of it as a quartet. It is never possible, however, quite to lose the feeling that the picture is "too big for the frame."

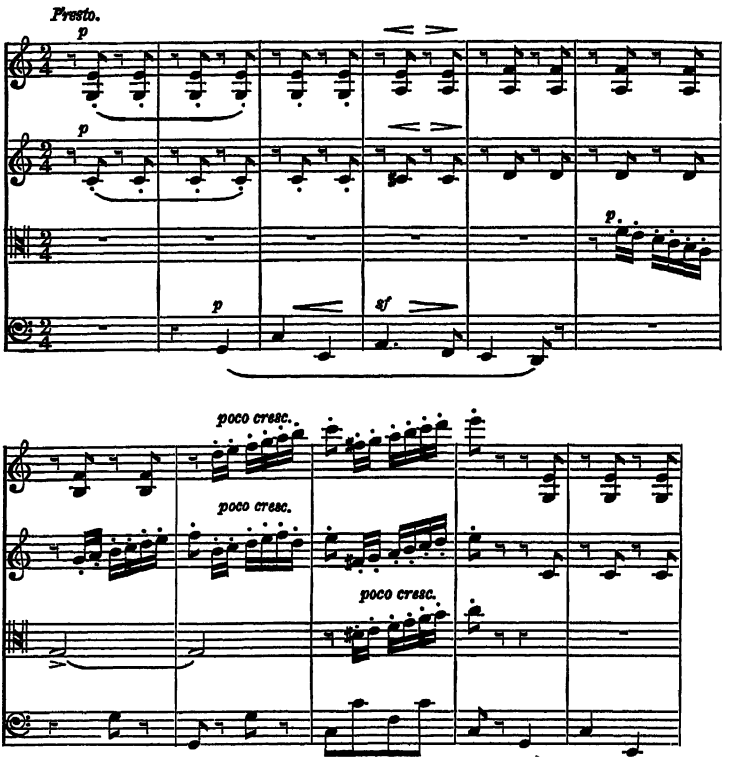
Perhaps the most terrible example of miscalculated Chamber Music it has ever been the author's fate to encounter is to be found in a quartet by a modern Russian composer little known in this country—Gretchaninow. For two reasons it is difficult to resist the temptation to quote one of the most glaring passages that it contains. The first reason is that it is a very early work, and an example of obvious inexperience of which the composer himself is, in all probability, not particularly proud. A student may therefore see in it some of the faults he might be likely to commit himself, and a gross error of judgment, if sufficiently palpable, may act as a strong deterrent.

The second reason is that in a certain recently published book this very passage is cited as an interesting example of modern quartet music, and warmly praised.

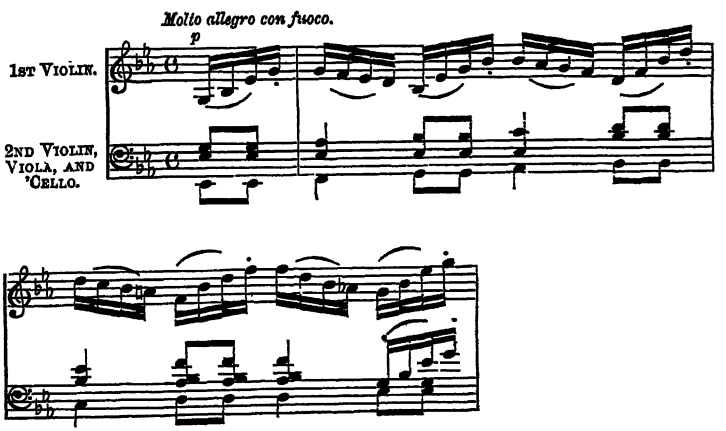
EX. 98.

It is hoped that this may be an all-sufficient warning in itself, and that no more need be said of the dangers of attempting sensational and quasi-melodramatic representation when writing for strings in Chamber Music.

Another sin in quartet-writing ~~not perhaps so heinous as that prominently dwelt upon in~~ the last few pages, but ~~even more prevalent must now briefly~~ be dealt ~~with.~~ Those

composers who are cultivated pianists will often find it difficult to dismiss the piano from their thoughts when setting down their ideas, and the result is a preponderance of pianistic passages in quartets otherwise well conceived. The three notable quartets of Schumann suffer in some measure from this fault. It is not that the offending passages are actually playable on a piano as they stand, on the contrary this is very often not the case. But the arrangement of the parts and the nature of the figuration which adorns them suggest the piano in every outline, and the kind of music conceived would unquestionably sound more congruous if played upon the keyboard. Let us glance for one moment at the trio from the Scherzo of Schumann's Quartet in F major (Op. 41, No. 2).

EX. 99.

The music is splendid. The 'cello has a strongly expressive phrase admirably suited to its capabilities: the scales on the violins and viola are delightful. One does not want to eliminate the strings altogether, but one simply yearns for the addition of a piano part, and a rearrangement of the whole passage.

The quartet music of Mendelssohn, himself also a trained pianist, suffers in some degree from the same unfortunate quality, and, like Schumann, he often shapes and phrases his violin figures as if they were meant to be fingered at the keyboard. The Quartet in E flat (Op. 44, No. 3) has a first movement with an admirable, almost Beethovenish, principal theme, and much strong and effective development; but in the last movement we encounter such unadulterated pianism as the following:—

EX. 100.

Other instances of a like kind might readily be given, but enough has been said by way of warning, and the last words of these extended and extensive remarks upon the art of quartet-writing shall be in the nature of a reiteration. If there is one piece of advice which needs reiterating more than any other, it is an urgent recommendation to the earnest and thorough study of counterpoint in all its branches. Through

counterpoint not only will the art of free part-writing be best attained, but also the art of working flexibly within the scope of one's material, and the power of reading from score with facility.

In addition to that the process will involve a valuable species of mental training, not the least important result of which will be that the composer will find himself able to overcome a certain inevitable aversion to the practice of making alterations. In a word, it will train him in habit of mind as well as in the power of applying technical resources to the highest ends.

There are some who look upon counterpoint as a mere exercise of ingenuity, and associate the very name it bears with cleverness and lack of inspiration. It has been said that its over-serious pursuit offers difficulties so formidable that the attention is apt to be drawn from the true purpose of music, and the affection centred upon mathematical artifices rather than the impulses of natural expression. This is a very serious charge, which, in the words of a famous musical critic of the day, is invariably brought by those who do not understand their business against those who do. One can answer it with confidence. For every composer who has suffered from knowing too much about the technical possibilities of his art there are at least fifty who have suffered far more through knowing too little. The fact is that a mastery of part-writing, which the study of counterpoint will unfailingly tend to develop, gives more freedom to inspiration than anything else. A 'cello part that would sound well transposed to the violin, a violin melody that would make a good bass, or a viola passage that would sound interesting if given prominence in the top part, are all things that one might desire to invent. And it will largely depend upon the soundness of one's technical equipment whether their invention is natural and spontaneous, or whether it is the result of the laborious and tortuous twistings of an insufficiently controlled brain.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the nearer one's acquired equipment approaches the level of one's musical imagination the more perfect the resultant work is likely to become. Just as the

most excellent instrument is that which intrudes the least possible mechanism between the player's musical intention and his actual expression of it, so the most excellent composition will be that which is, in every mechanical detail, most nearly a direct outcome of the inspiration of the composer.

Music is so complex a form of art that except in rare instances, such as in Bach or in Mozart, one seldom feels that the ideas and the skill to use them are precisely on the same level. But this, at least, is an ideal for the man of ideas to strive to attain.

If his thoughts are worth the thinking—if they live and glow with independence—no mental training which he may undergo for his own advancement will check their pulsation or cloud their brightness. On the contrary he will, as he traverses the beaten track, grow in confidence whilst he grows in mastery. And, if he does not foolishly close his eyes the while, he will not fail to be continually conscious of the vast expanses that lie on either side as he passes, nor will his vision lose the sense of that far distance, straight ahead, which holds in its dim unfathomable blue great mysteries still to be unveiled, and all the golden promise of the future.

CHAPTER V.

THE STRING TRIO, QUINTET, SEXTET, ETC., WITH SOME REMARKS UPON THE EFFECTIVE USE OF THE DOUBLE BASS IN CHAMBER MUSIC.

THE composition of trios for strings alone has never exercised a very great fascination for composers. It is easier for the average musical mind to think in four parts than in three. It is, one might almost say, a more natural mental process. In vocal composition the fact that human voices are divided into four distinct kinds, each with its own compass, led, very early, to the proper understanding of the art of four-part writing. The same acquirement transferred to the blending of the tones of stringed instruments found an ample satisfaction in the working together of a similar number of independent parts, and, even though only three distinct kinds of instrument were employed, the addition of an extra part seemed eminently desirable. The string quartet, with its two violins, having proved itself to be, as we have seen, a perfectly adjusted piece of musical machinery, it is scarcely to be wondered at if the subtraction of one of those factors seems not only to diminish the power, but to destroy the particular kind of harmonic balance which one's mental training has led one to devise.

Yet the trio of one violin, viola, and violoncello, has a separate purpose for its existence as an art-form, and some few special characteristics of its own, as the inspection of some of the not-too-numerous existing specimens will readily disclose.

Almost the only works for this combination which exhibit commanding genius and artistic strength are those of Beethoven. There is a Divertimento in E flat of Mozart which is, in its delicate outlines and gracious phrasing, a very notable example of restrained Chamber Music. But the five string trios of Beethoven contain more important material, and are likely, if closely studied, to yield more of the secrets of this form of writing than any other works for this combination yet published.

The most important are the three trios which bear the Opus number 9, and of these, the third, in C minor, is unquestionably the finest, having strength, freedom of motion, and contrapuntal elaboration which is quite surprising in a work for only three instruments. But what is even more surprising in these trios than any such triumph over technical limitations is the wonderful example they give of Beethoven's power of purely musical expression within the most limited means. The texture of the works is, of course, lighter than that of his quartets; there is little attempt at richness of colouring, or great sonority. In a word he appears to recognise that a trio, to justify its existence, should be a *trio* and not a quartet in disguise. As anyone who has attempted the composition of a string trio well knows, there is a great temptation in writing for three strings to eke out one's material by extensive use of 'double stopping,' but the over-indulgence in this device destroys what should be regarded as one of the essentials of such a work—the clear outline of its single parts. Directly one is allowed to lose the sense that three instrumentalists are playing, the real 'trio spirit' is destroyed. A trio which sounds like a quartet is a clever trick, but it is almost as falsely conceived as a quartet which sounds like a string orchestra. It is only a question of degree. Yet, as all experienced composers know, the use of three parts is often the basis of musical construction. String-writing for orchestra, as often as not, is deliberately conceived in three parts for greater clarity and directness, and nothing is more effective in orchestration than the blending of three distinctly characteristic rhythmic devices given severally to strings, wood-wind,

and brass. Of this excellent effect the string trio may be said to afford much scope in the nature of a sketch. Three-part writing should be clearer than four, and easier to listen to, the real difficulty in trio-writing being to obtain sufficient interest and variety, and, ~~especially in modern days~~, any sort of novelty of harmonic treatment. For vagueness and groping indecision the medium is unsuitable, but the composer who thinks clearly and is unashamed of sharp outlines will find in the string trio a very trusty exponent for his slighter and more delicate imaginings.

Most of the advice upon technical points already given in the chapters on the String Quartet will apply equally well in connection with the subject under present discussion. Certain dangers that beset the path of the beginner will be less in evidence, others perchance may be more strongly accentuated. There will clearly be fewer chances for contrast of tonal force, and such as may still be available will be more difficult of attainment. There will be fewer opportunities of lightening the texture—~~of~~ "~~letting the light through,~~" ~~as it were~~—since with such slender material it will not often be possible to permit any instrument to be silent for more than a few beats at a stretch. More frequent dependence, ~~however,~~ may be placed upon the harmonic *contour* of single-note passages, which, as in the following example from Mozart's Divertimento in E flat, may be made to suggest chord-structure in a very definite way.

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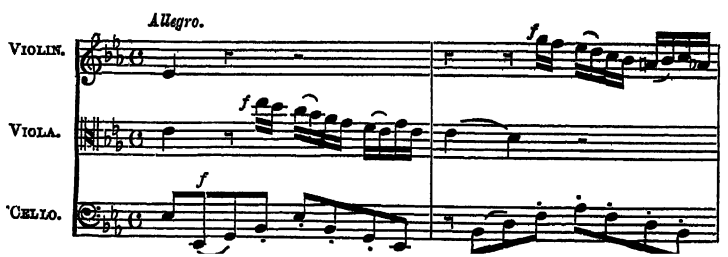
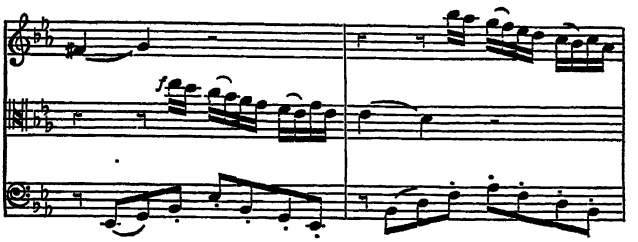
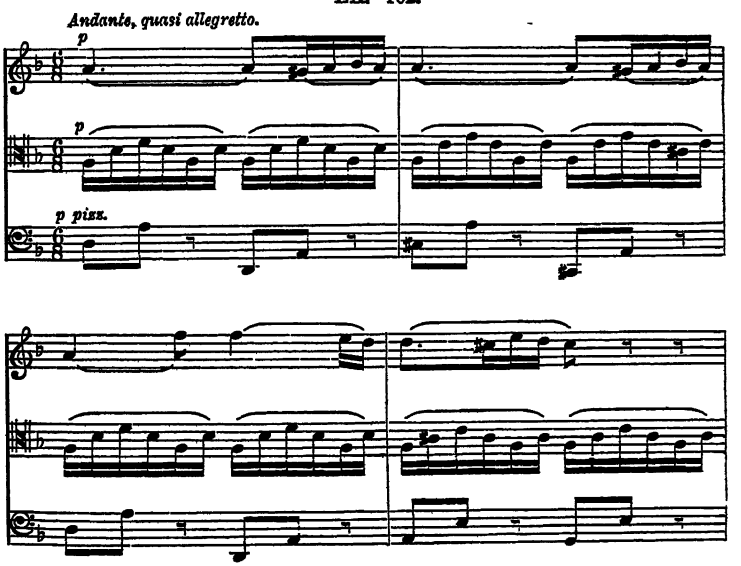
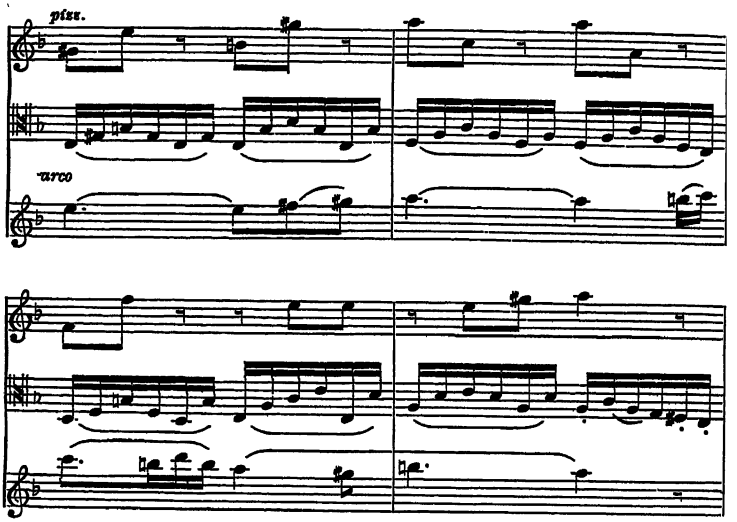

An even better instance than the above may be cited from the Andante of Beethoven's Trio in D, Op. 9, No. 2, where the suave melody of the violin is supported by a regular pulsation of 'cello *pizzicato* notes and a very full representation of harmony, on the viola, the separate characteristics of each part being well emphasised and contributing greatly to the clearness of the total effect.

EX. 102.

The true value of such separate characterisation is well demonstrated by the ease with which the composer is

able, later on, to transfer the melodic line from the violin to the 'cello, the viola here supplying not only the harmonic structure but the bass-outline, whilst the *pizzicato* pulsation, now carried on at the top of the score, adds piquancy to a very graceful design.

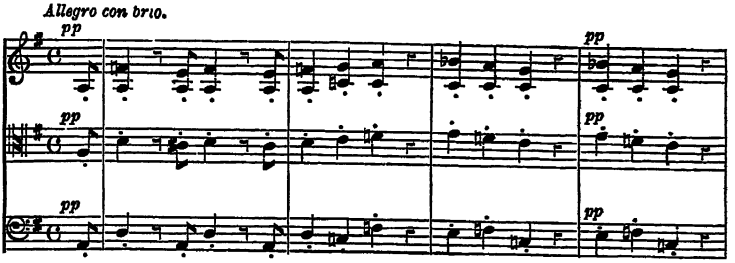
EX. 103.

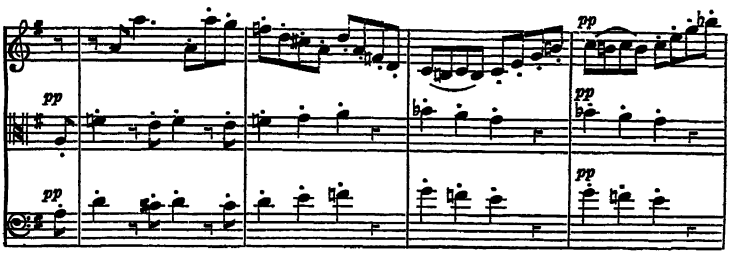


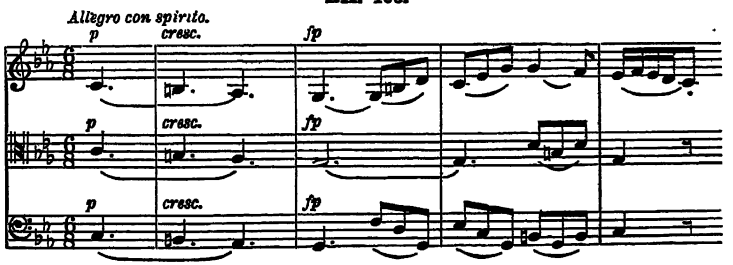
Harmonic figuration of this kind, useful as it is, may easily be continued too long, and there is, besides, the danger of dropping into a purely mechanical style of writing broken-chord passages which will always sound rather stilted and old-fashioned, and perhaps recall the flavour of some of the pianoforte sonatinas of our school-room days. Even a hasty perusal of the Beethoven trios will show that there are other devices available for suggesting rich harmonisation without having too frequent recourse to the writing of either arpeggios or double notes. In the first movement of the Trio in G, Op. 9, No. 1, the parts are, on the arrival of the second subject,

[1] See footnote, page 90.

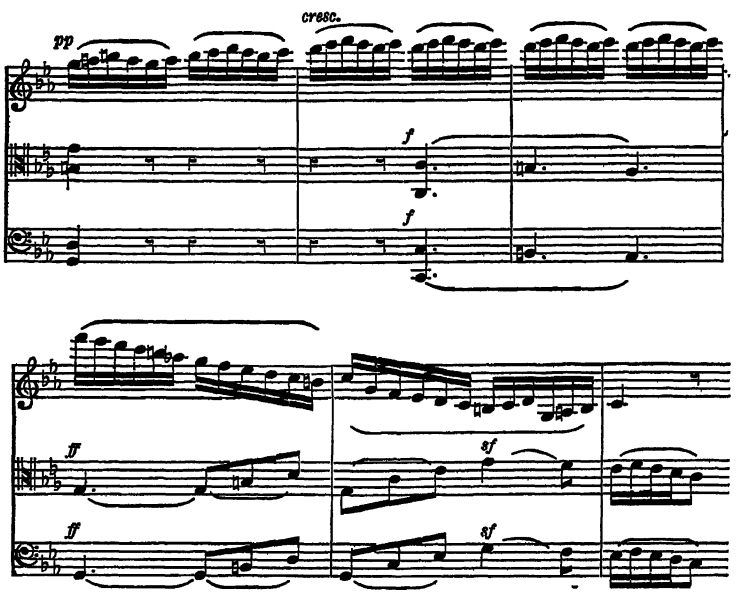
cunningly distributed in a manner which seems like string-quartet workmanship:—

EX. 104.

but, on the immediate repetition of this material, the fact that it is conceived as a composition for three instruments is abundantly clear.

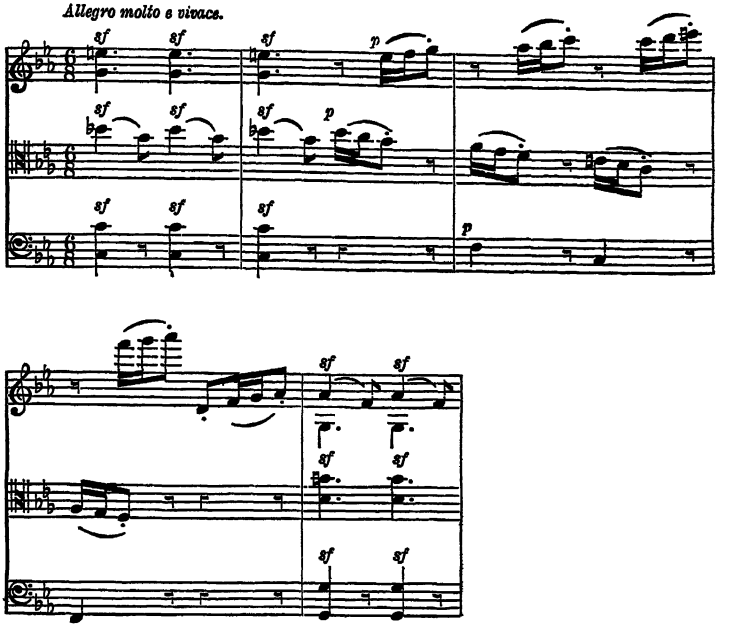
EX. 105.

The opening of the Trio in C minor, Op. 9, No. 3, has dignity and richness, and at no point in the subject would the addition of a fourth part add anything to either of these attributes.

EX. 106.

Among the many features which make this movement a model of skilful application of the power to make a very great effect with very limited material, none are more striking than the masterly return of the opening subject at the end of the development section. At this point the music is full of impetus, and carries with it a subtle suggestion of strength, yet the three instruments to which it is entrusted quite adequately express the forcefulness of the situation, whilst doing nothing that is not legitimately within their province.

EX. 107.



If we would learn the strong effect that can be made by the occasional use of double notes, in order to obtain contrast of tone, and exceptional emphasis, we may profitably study the Scherzo of the same work, from which the following brief extract is reprinted:—

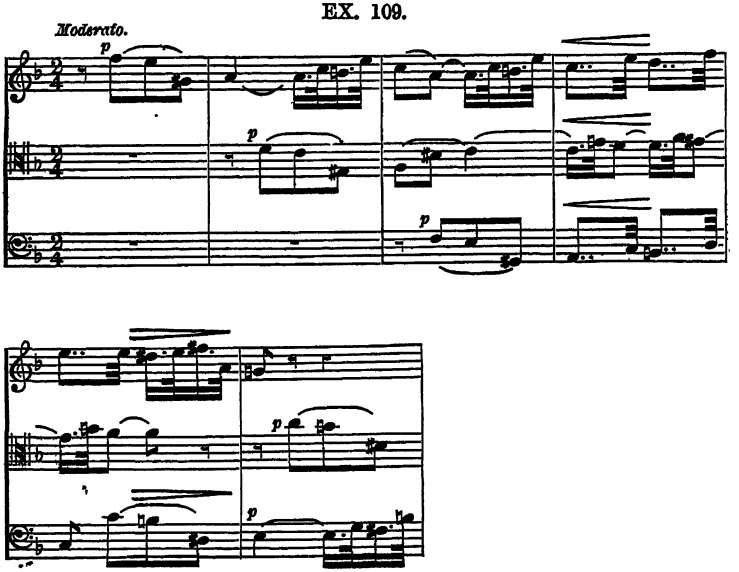
EX. 108.

It is a movement of marvellous vivacity and vigour, quite as great, in its own way, as the Scherzos of the Op. 18 quartets, and seems to scamper merrily along as if quite unconscious that any limitations exist in music at all!

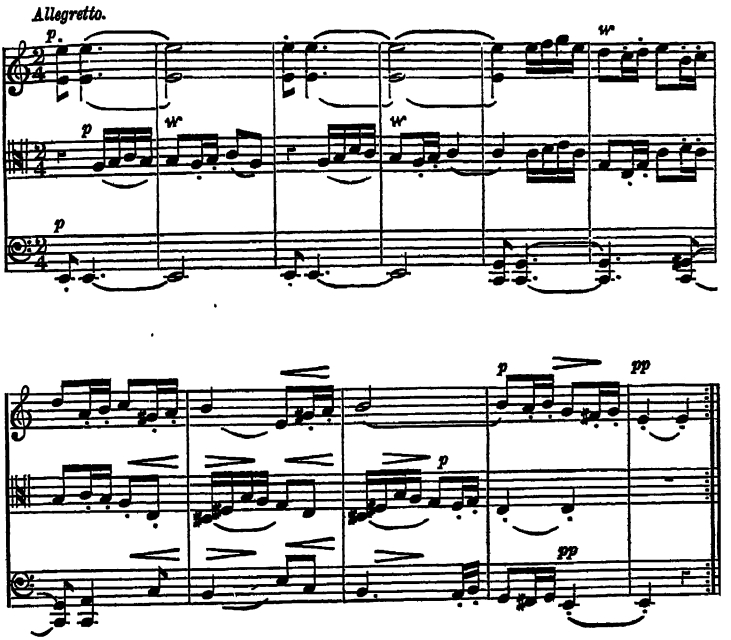
Nowadays the attitude has changed. We seldom find a musician content to work in a narrow sphere, and the particular type of genius that accepts limitations and triumphs in spite of them is becoming rarer every day. Since Beethoven's time very few string trios have been published, and, were it not for the fact that some five or six examples by modern composers show remarkable skill in expressing the idioms of a later period through this slender form, one might have been tempted to declare that the combination was totally unfitted for present-day use.

In ordinary parlance necessity is the mother of invention. If a very modern composer ventures to write a string trio his necessity must become the mother of simplicity, for he has to

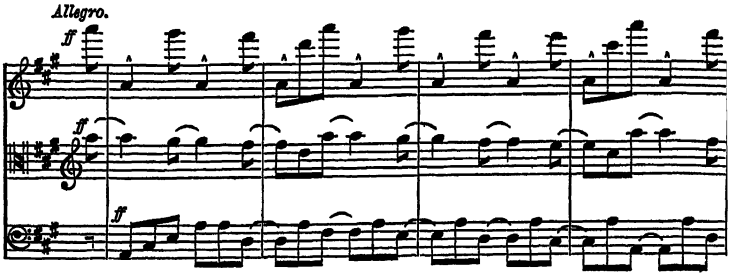
abandon all his pretensions to complexity and harmonic thickness, and frankly strip his music of all but its barest outlines. Amongst the trios written since those already quoted, two examples from the pen of Heinrich von Herzogenberg rank very high. Herzogenberg was a distinguished contemporary of Brahms, and the latter's influence, writ large upon all his Chamber Music, was certainly of no detriment to the quality of his work. These two trios show great freedom in part-writing, and have the special merit that they never seem to call for fuller harmony than they possess. This is perhaps especially remarkable as they are unquestionably more modern in character than those of Beethoven, and belong to a school of composition in which the qualities of richness and sonority were always of very great account.

As an example of pure three-part writing of a reflective character, the following quotation from the second of these works, that in F, Op. 27, No. 2, will perhaps be of interest. The contrapuntal treatment is very deftly conceived, and there is no feeling of thinness, although double notes are not used.

EX. 109.

In the Trio in A, Op. 27, No. 1, the movement which stands in place of a Scherzo affords some further instances of contrapuntal ingenuity, and has also a clear rhythmic character and a strong suggestion of the viola 'colour' to heighten the effect. Here again the means are quite adequate for the purpose, and the players, although occasionally playing on two strings at once, never pretend to be four instrumentalists instead of three.

EX. 110.

There are other passages worthy of remark in the same work, but it must suffice to quote an interesting device from the Coda of the Finale.

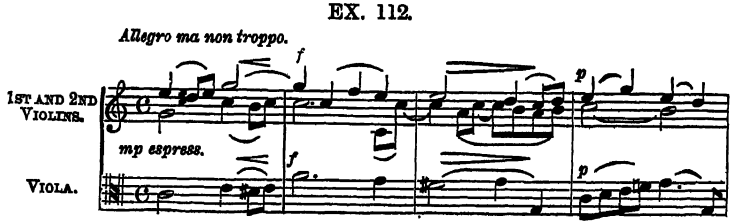
This is a sprightly and very ingenious variant of a tune virtually in octaves for the violin and viola.

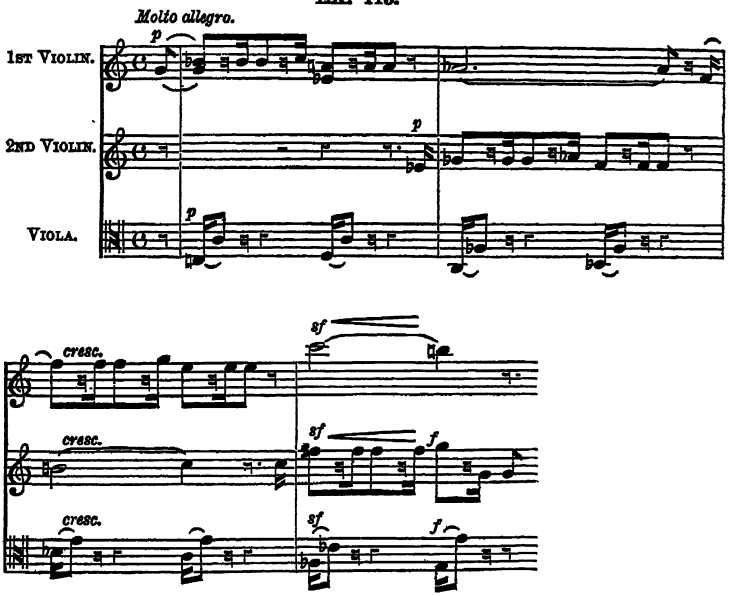
EX. 111.

The insistence on the open string A is a highly effective piece of craftsmanship, and, slight though the intrinsic interest of the music may be at this point, there is much brilliance in the achievement.

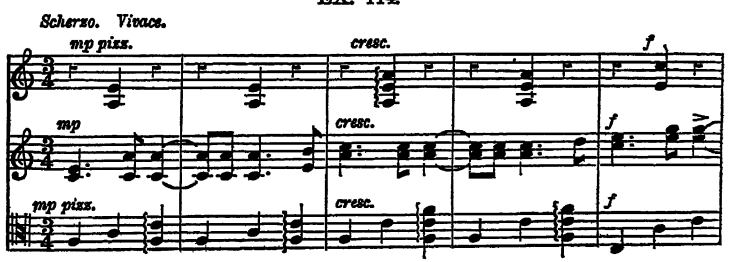
The Terzetto, Op. 74, by Dvořák, although designed for performance by two violins and viola (instead of the more usual, and more useful, combination of violin, viola, and violoncello) may, perhaps, most fittingly be discussed at the present point of progress.

It is a work with much pure and facile three-part writing to commend it, and it possesses many of those special national characteristics which make Dvořák's music so refreshing.

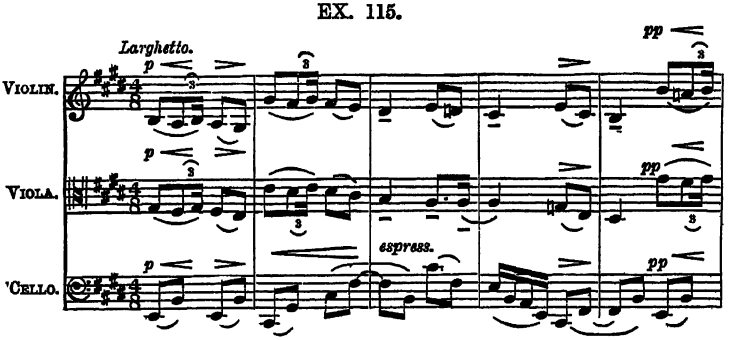
There is delightful ease and grace in the opening subject of the first movement, which flows on naturally without ever seeming to chafe at the great restrictions which the limited capacity of the viola (as a bass instrument) must of necessity enforce.

EX. 112.

Very charming, in its rhythmic freedom, is the initial subject of the Finale, in which again the three single voices seem all-sufficient.

EX. 113.

In other parts of the same work there is an unusual preponderance of double stopping, giving the music in places almost the effect of a quintet. In the Scherzo the excursions into this dangerous domain are extremely well conducted, for the separate character of each instrument is preserved, and the scheme is clearly laid out for three instruments, though it ceases to be in three parts.

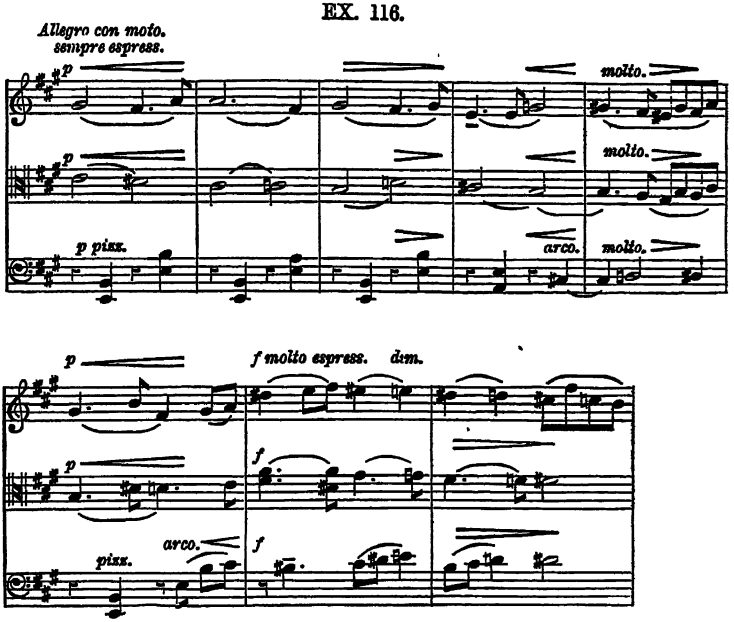
EX. 114.

It may be said in passing that *the choice of key* in a trio is a very great factor in assisting the composer to conceive passages such as that given above. In a trio for violin, viola, and 'cello, C major or minor will give more likely chords than any other key, and will permit a greater insistence on the lower and more sonorous-toned strings. Next to this, G is perhaps the best choice. It would probably be unwise to write a trio in a rather remote key, such as D flat or B, unless it was the composer's deliberate desire to confine himself almost entirely to single notes in presenting his principal subject-matter.

If we wish to see how some of the restlessness of the modern musical outlook can find embodiment even within the slight framework of three strings, we may gather much to interest us from Max Reger's Trio for Violin, Viola, and 'Cello, Op. 77 *b*, the most recent addition to the limited number of works in this category by distinguished composers. Much of the treatment is distinctly new. At the beginning of the Larghetto, for instance, an extremely sonorous effect is obtained by using the low notes of all three instruments. The sound here is astonishingly rich and full, although no double stopping is employed for a great number of bars.

EX. 115.

In the last movement the temptation, here resisted, has proved at times too strong, and there are many pages sounding almost like a quartet. But it is all very cleverly contrived. It begins with a subject almost recalling Mozart, but the music

at once becomes restless in tonality, and it is only in the barest outlines that the resemblance may be said to continue. This is the second subject, where for a few moments the feeling is tranquil and comfortable:—

EX. 116.



It will be seen that the tranquillity is very short-lived, and that, after only four bars, chromaticism again asserts itself, awaking once more the spirit of indecision and unrest.

If the student desires further instruction in the art of applying modern phraseology to the ancient skeleton combination here under discussion, he may be reminded that two very notable modern composers besides Max Reger have given string trios to the world. He is recommended to purchase the 'Serenade in C major,' Op. 10, by Ernst von Dohnanyi (Doblinger), and the 'Serenade in D major,' by Leone Sinigaglia (Breitkopf and Härtel), in which he will find the problems which present themselves for solution faced boldly and with considerable success

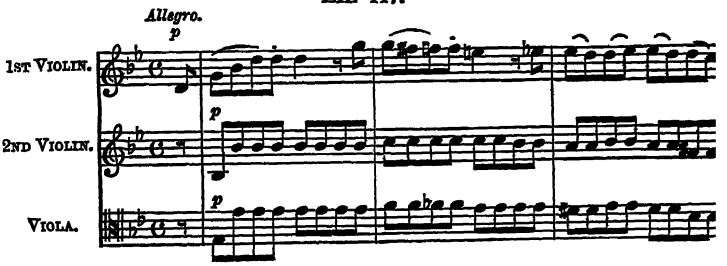
In dealing with combinations of *more* than four stringed instruments, the student who has mastered the principles of good quartet-writing will not find himself confronted with many fresh structural difficulties. In the writing of a string quintet there is, of course, the purely mechanical difficulty of managing with facility an additional part. Those who have long familiarised themselves with four-part procedure, especially, may find it rather strange to "think quintet" instead of "thinking quartet." But it will be better not to dwell very strongly upon this point, for it is seldom that good quintets contain actual five-part harmony long continued. The ensemble of such work differs far more in matters which depend upon quality of tone than in the dexterity with which five real and separate parts are kept continuously flowing. The difference is a difference in colour rather than in contrapuntal skill. There is a greater prominence in the viola or violoncello tone, giving some added power and richness. There is, correspondingly, a further necessity for the use of rests to counteract any tendency to undue heaviness that may present itself. At the same time, almost every principle and precept ~~set forth in the chapters~~ on the String Quartet will apply with equal force to the composition of a quintet; ~~and little~~ special information need ~~here~~ be given. Some extracts and brief allusions to a few of the works most likely to prove helpful models to those anxious to pursue the further study of string-writing may, however, be fittingly offered in this place.

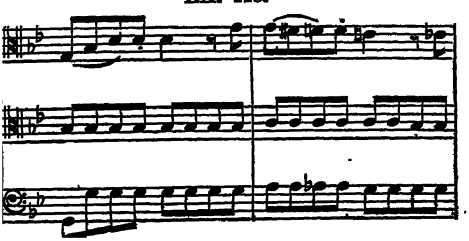
It may be said at once that fine quintets are far less numerous than fine quartets. In early times, however, the quintet form was very popular. Boccherini published no less than 125 quintets—of these only twelve were for the now usual combination of two violins, two violas, and one 'cello; the others have two 'cellos and one viola. It is in one of these quintets that the famous Minuet (which is almost the only work by its composer which survives to-day) occurs—though it is now generally heard on a stringed orchestra, for which, one may freely admit, it is admirably suited.

~~The~~ combinations ~~which~~ includes two 'cellos and only one viola ~~is apt to become a little heavy, although there is~~ o

course, the great example of the Schubert Quintet in C to contradict any dogmatic assertion one may venture to bring forward on that point. Still more difficult in manipulation is another, and much rarer, distribution, in which the double-bass is employed as the fifth instrument. The quintets of Onslow (now quite forgotten, though much played in their day) were composed in many instances for this combination, and the attractive work in G major by Dvořák (Op. 77) is a proof that there is still a certain charm in the idea.

One of the most perfect specimens of writing for five instruments is the Quintet in G minor of Mozart, which fills a place, indeed, amongst the greatest musical treasures of all time. The arrangement of the parts for the first seventeen bars of this work affords an excellent example of what has been said regarding the possibilities of obtaining greater difference in colour by the addition of another viola to the scheme. The quiet reflective mood of the opening melody, which begins thus:—

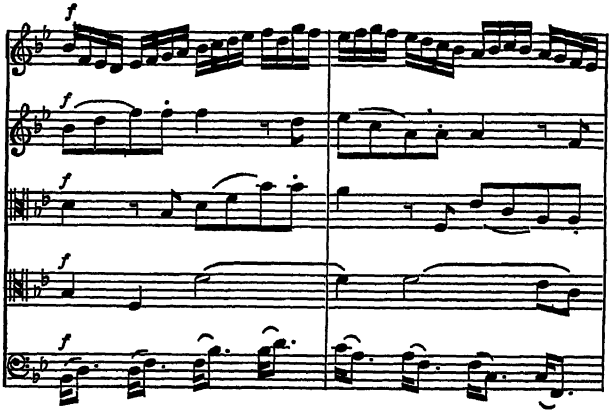
EX. 117.

acquires increased depth and significance when it is transferred eight bars later, to the two violas and 'cello:—

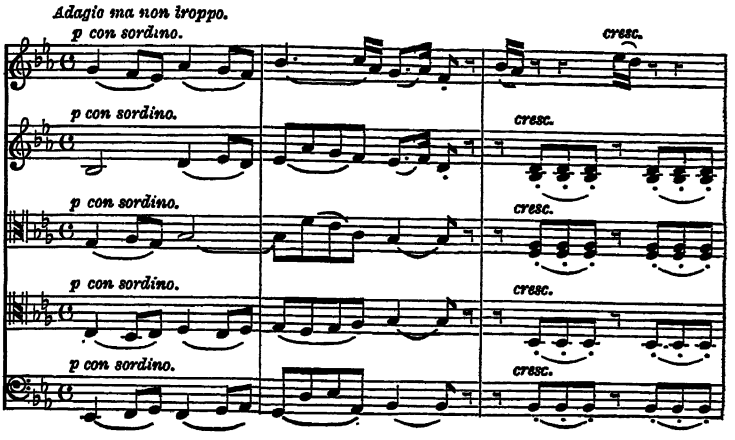
EX. 118.

The re-entrance of the two violins at the eighteenth bar exhibits another feature of note, for they continue the strain by playing the melody in octaves together.

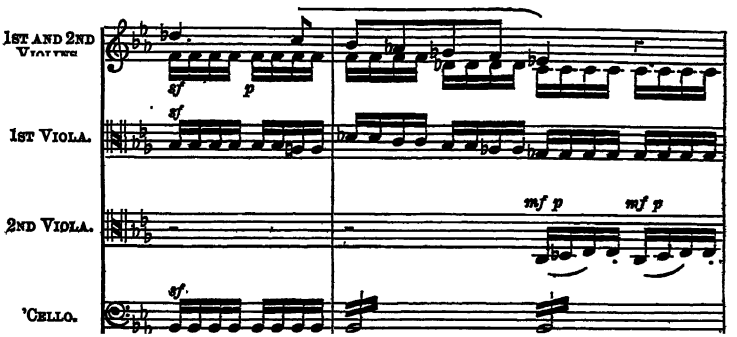
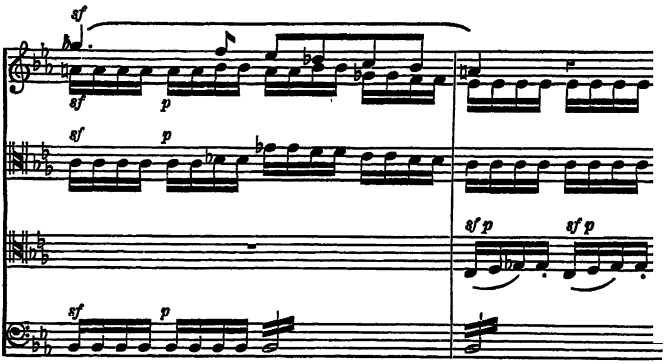
It is often extremely effective in a quintet to work upon a four-part basis, and to strengthen the uppermost part by doubling it in the octave below, either upon the second violin or one of the violas. In a similar way, if occasion demands, the lowest part may be strengthened by reinforcement from a viola playing the bass-notes an octave above the 'cello.

Of the skill to give independent life to each of the five parts, however, there is no lack of evidence either in this movement or in those which follow.

This skill is plainly apparent in the forceful passages of thematic development which call for ingenuity of construction. The following quotation is a fair sample of such mastery:—

EX. 119.

The extra instrument also imparts dignity and an added voice of pathos to the muted tones which first disclose the loveliness of the slow movement:—

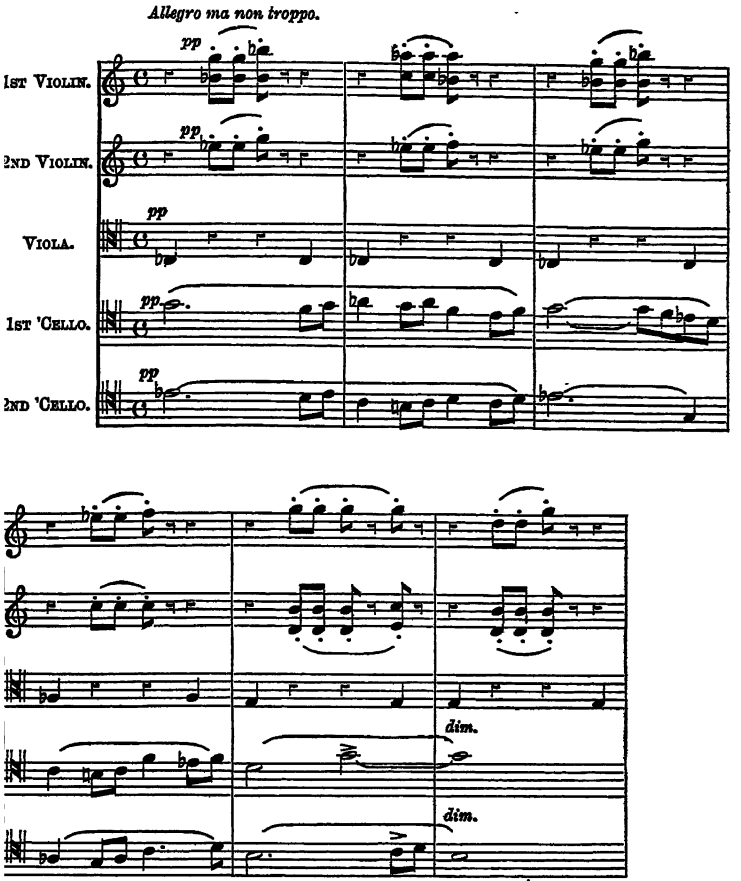
EX. 120.

Whilst, later in the same Adagio, the second viola, without which the conception would have been impossible, adds its sobbing phrases to one of the most pathetic and deeply-felt passages in the whole catalogue of Chamber Music.

EX. 121.

An inspiration such as the above, which it seems almost cruel to wrest from the context, gives us a glimpse of the highest attainment possible in our art. If there is, in human life, a grief too deep for words, one can hardly believe there is a grief too deep for music.

It must be confessed that the Finale of this quintet fails to maintain either the impressive dignity or the high level of technical supremacy of those movements which precede it. One is almost tempted to wish that, as in the case of Schubert in his B minor Symphony, Mozart had been content to leave an unfinishable work unfinished. There are, it goes without saying, numerous technical points worthy of observation. A great deal of this Finale, however, consists of what is virtually solo work for the first violin, accompanied by a quartet of strings. This is, from the modern standpoint, the least satisfactory solution of the problem of writing for five instruments, and the student will learn more from the methods employed in the first three movements than from this comparatively careless and light-hearted Finale, which seems almost as if it might have been imported from another work in quite a different mood.

In the Schubert Quintet in C, Op. 163, which has already been mentioned, the employment of two violoncellos in the place of two violas reveals some further possibilities for creating warm effects of tone. It will be noted that the first 'cello

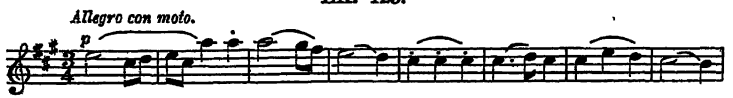
part is kept very much in a high register, and sometimes both 'cellos together are found above the viola.

EX. 122.

It is a wonderful work throughout;—wonderful in the contrapuntal freedom with which the five instruments are treated, wonderful in its massive body of tone (especially at the opening of the Scherzo), and most wonderful of all in the beauty and variety of its spontaneous subject-matter.

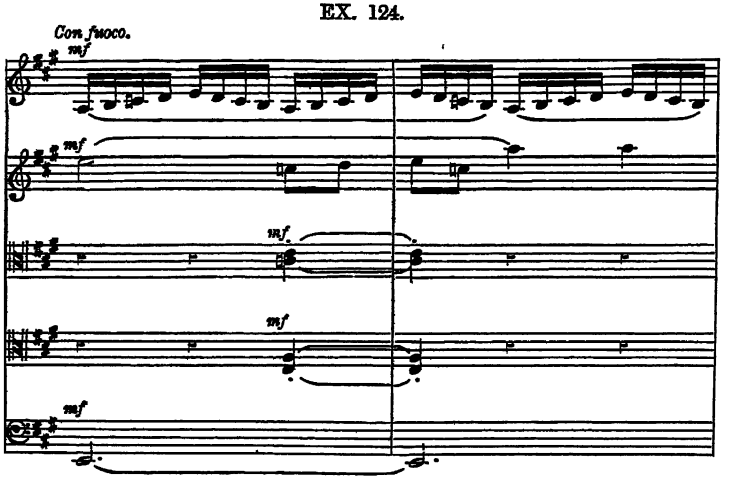
Beethoven's two quintets, in E flat and C, are early works,

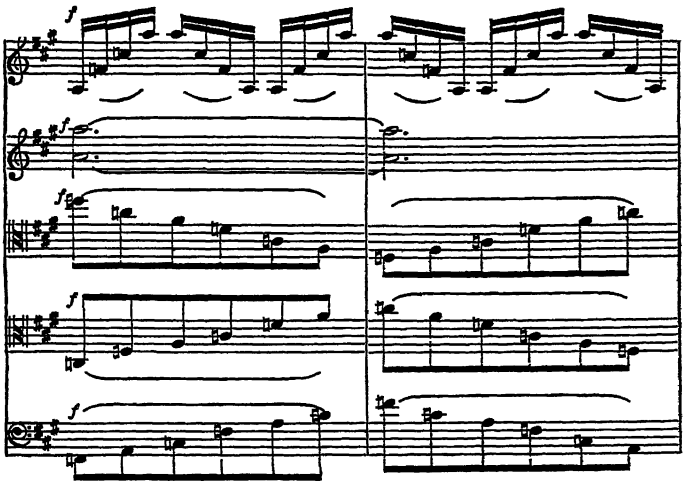
and, fine as they are (especially the latter), they have none of the extraordinary features of the more mature quartets.[1] Moreover, so much has been said in earlier chapters concerning the merits of these quartets that one may perhaps be permitted in the present connection to seek material from other sources. It is especially gratifying in this instance to turn for a moment to the work of a composer whose quartets have already been drawn upon for the purposes of unfavourable rather than appreciatory comment. The Quintet in A major, Op. 18, of Mendelssohn is, indeed, a charming example of Chamber Music in its best sense, and is, at all points, on a far higher level than any of the same master's quartets. The first movement boasts a main subject which reminds one, in its simplicity and purity, of Mozart himself,

EX. 123.

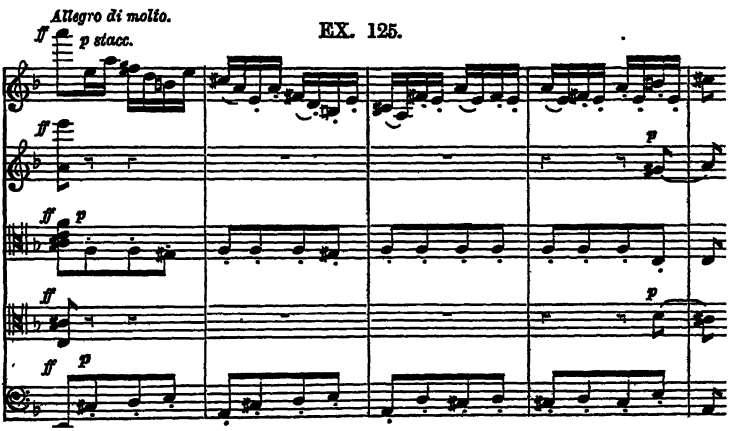


and contains passages full of breadth, colour, and inventive facility.

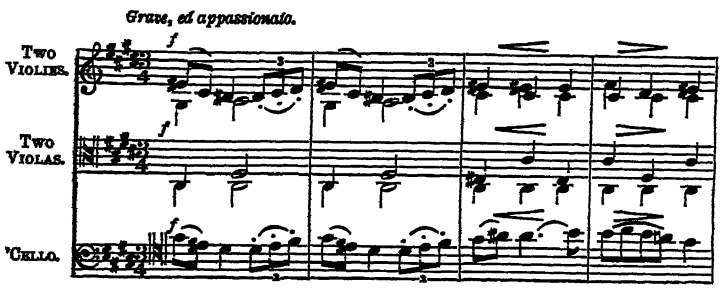
EX. 124.

[1] The Quintet in E flat (published as Op. 4) was actually a free arrangement of an Octet for wind instruments (published many years after as Op. 103).



Mendelssohn in this work adheres, and wisely, to the more usual combination which includes two violas. It enables him to deal more happily with the many incidents of delicacy and lightness into which he is prompted by his facile fancy. The Scherzo of this quintet is a superb example of that quaint elfin grace which renders Mendelssohn's works in this form unique. Starting, in the daintiest fashion, with a fugue resembling the pattering of fairy feet, we find many episodes from which we may learn the value of lightening the texture by means of rests.

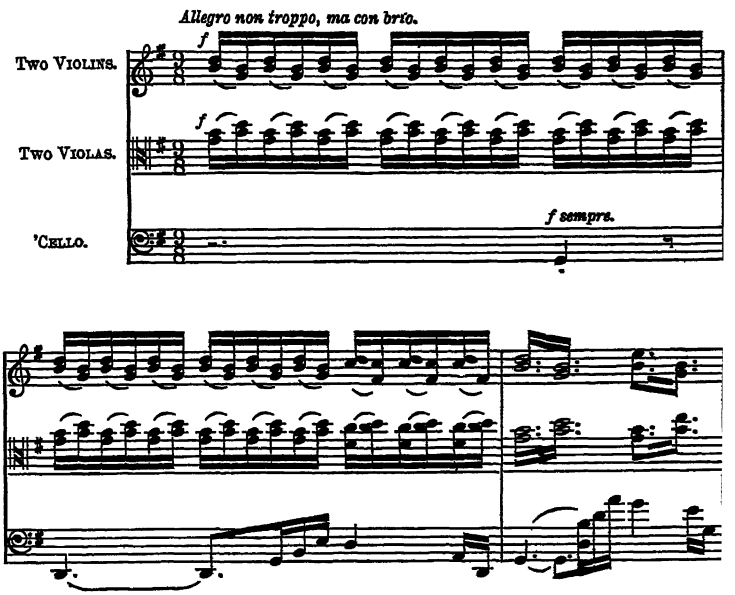
EX. 125.

The second quintet of Mendelssohn (Op. 87, in B flat) is not nearly so happy in treatment. He reverts here to the methods which disfigure the quartets. It begins at once in a similar manner to the Quartet in D (quoted on page 109), and is throughout rather more like a symphony for stringed orchestra than a quintet. It possesses, however, one feature worthy of study, in a charming Scherzo, which compensates for much that is not quite delectable in the rest of the work.

Amongst the string quintets of more recent times the two by Brahms (in F major, Op. 88, and in G major, Op. 111) stand out prominently from the rest, by reason of their earnestness and musical value rather than from any novelty of treatment which they may contain. They are both written for the combination which includes two violas, and in the later work of the two the viola tone predominates to a remarkable extent in the subject-matter of each movement. Two quotations illustrating different points must suffice. There is something fresh, perhaps, to observe in the skilful way in which a violoncello solo is made to stand above all the other parts at the opening of the slow movement of the F major Quintet, and something to be learned, maybe, from the way in which the other parts are distributed with a view to utilising the solemn tones of the lowest string of each instrument.

EX. 126.

The other example, though only three bars are given here, will readily recall to the mind of all those who have heard the Quintet in G the buoyant mood of the first movement, which is

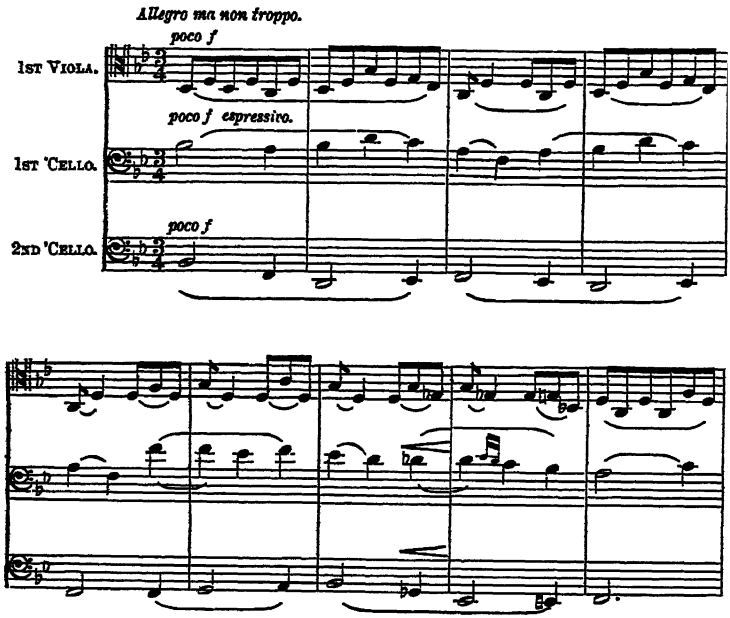
like the exuberance awakened in youth by the bright, visible gladness of a spring morning. It is the 'cello again which sings, but the mood is as diverse as the wit of man could possibly conceive. There is a thrill in the air, and those crossing phrases of the violins and violas are like leaves dancing in the wind and shining in the sunlight!

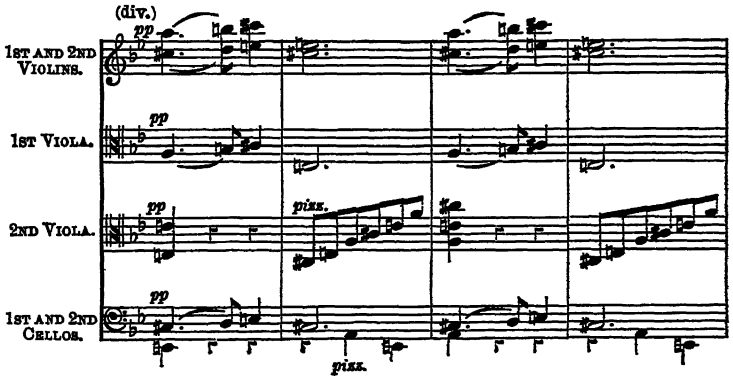
EX. 127.

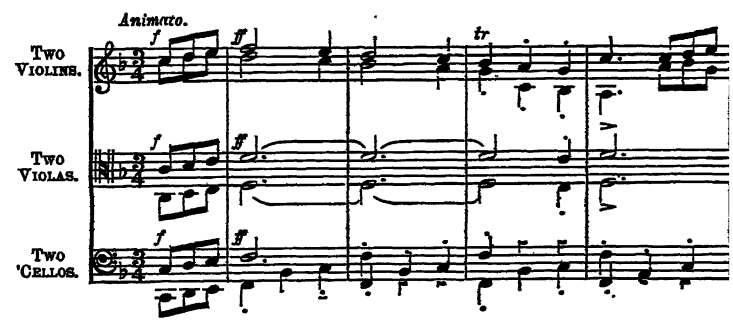


If the string quintets of Brahms are to be allowed only a few inadequate words of comment and appreciation in this chapter, some slight amends must now be made by according the first place to this composer in speaking of the capabilities of the next subject for review—the String Sextet. The combination of two violins, two violas, and two violoncellos evidently appealed very greatly to Brahms, and the pair of immortal compositions in this form which we owe to his genius are not only amongst his best works, but easily excel in beauty and importance any other string sextets composed

either before or since. In them he finds many opportunities for that rich, full colouring and sonorous quality of which he was so especially fond, the preponderance of the viola and 'cello tone helping him very greatly in this respect. At the very beginning of the Sextet in B flat, Op. 18, this aspect of his leanings is prominently displayed.

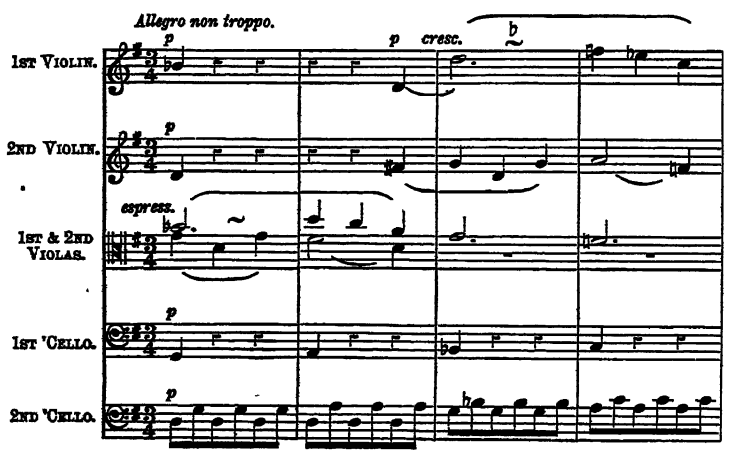
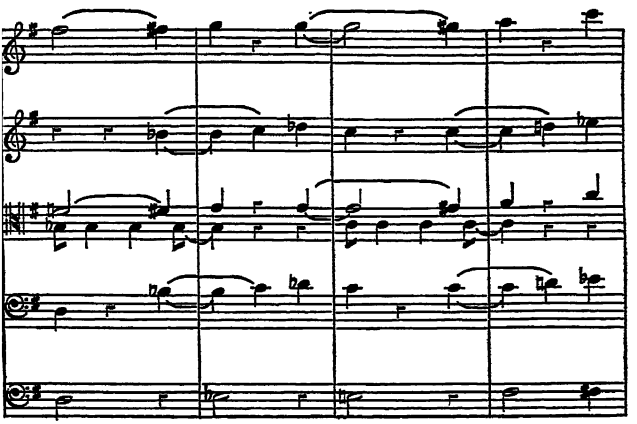
EX. 128.

The warmth of this beautiful and most grateful 'cello solo is well maintained, and sounds the key-note of the whole movement, in which many interesting instances of part-distribution occur. Not the least remarkable of these instances may be cited from a portion of the second subject, where all the instruments play *pianissimo* in the key of A major—the plucked basses of the second viola and second 'cello having a very happy effect against the suave melody in sixths and thirds.

EX. 129.

At the beginning of the Andante (a theme with variations) the violas and 'cellos again assume the lead, forming a quartet to themselves. In the Scherzo another plan is adopted, for the instruments are mostly treated in pairs, as the following quotation will show:—

EX. 130.

The Finale begins with an exactly similar part-distribution to that adopted in the statement of the principal subject of the

first movement. This portion of the work is remarkably interesting from the point of view of craftsmanship. Brahms turns his sextet, for a time, into two distinct string trios (two violins and first viola, and second viola and two 'cellos), and treats them antiphonally after the fashion of Spohr in his double-quartets (see page 151).

The second Sextet in G (Op. 36) is an extremely fine work also; not perhaps so attractive on first hearing as its companion, but fully on the same high artistic plane of thought. There is here more independence of outline—more pure six-part writing—but, as a whole, the melodic intention is less clearly defined, and the mood more misty and indefinite; there is also a good deal of unrest and agitation. There are moments, however, where the outlook is as clear as in the earlier work—notably in the trio of the Scherzo, where great strength is gained by the use of double notes, and there are passages of contrapuntal construction well worthy of study. As an example of the more intricate, yet lucid and interesting, character of the writing for the instruments, one quotation is set forth below—a few bars from the first movement.

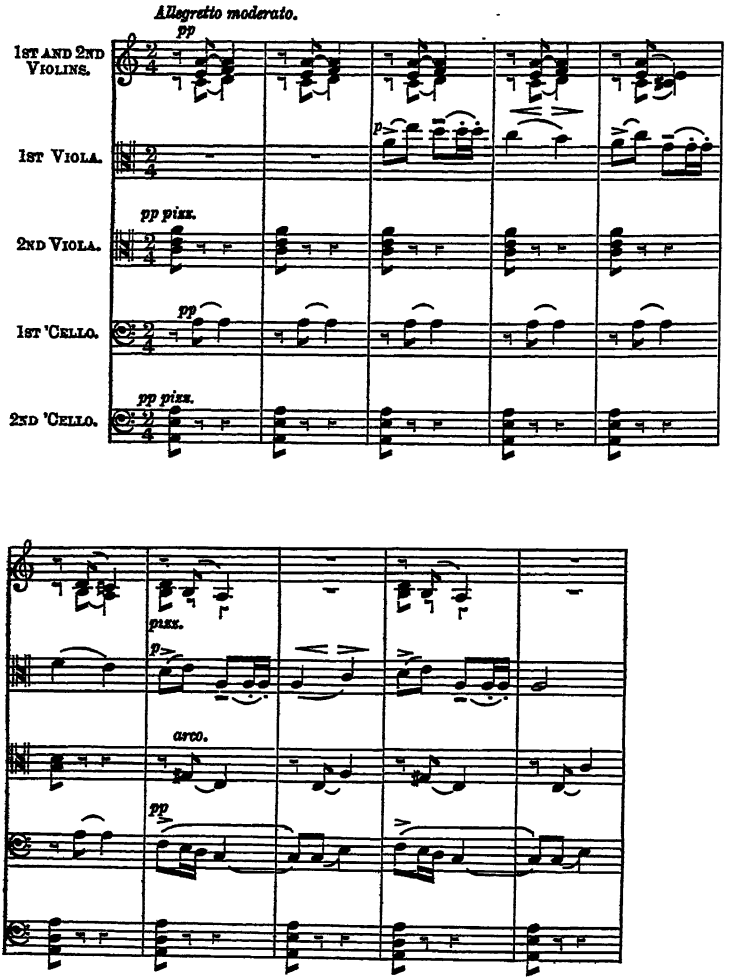
EX. 131.

Amongst other points here illustrated one may notice how the two violins answer the two violas—how the two smooth subjects of the sequence in the last four bars are each strengthened in the lower octave—and how the 'cellos share the chief interest, the second being above for the first four bars and then dropping below to supply the bass for the remainder of the passage.

As remote from the intellectual sphere of these two great works as it is possible to be, the highly interesting sextet of Tschaïkowsky (Souvenir de Florence, Op. 70) is nevertheless a composition from which much may be learnt that is new and suggestive.

Tschaïkowsky, like Brahms, often obtains a most massive effect with his six instruments, but it is gained in a totally different way.

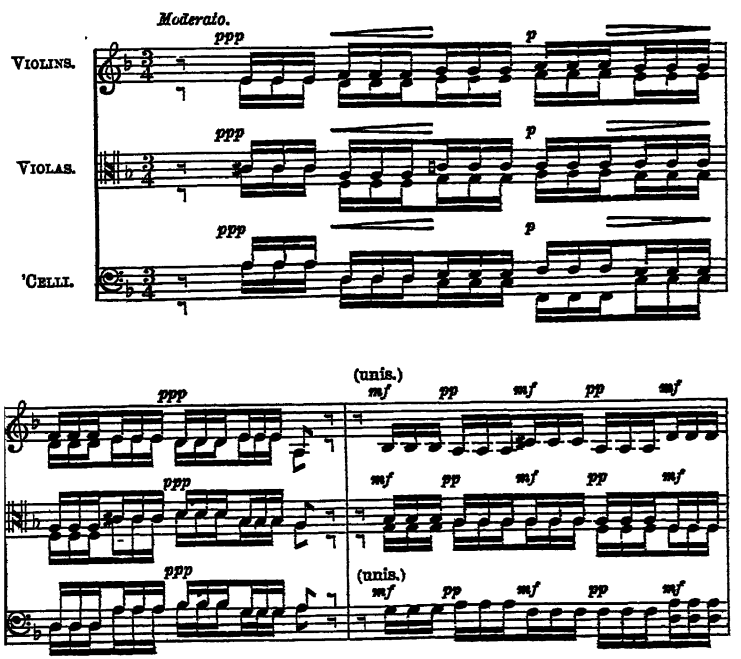
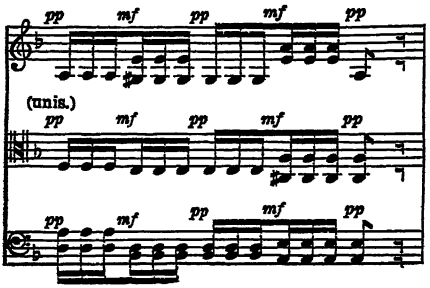
There are also passages of curious colour, which seem almost like imitations of orchestral writing, though they are not orchestral in the sense that the instruments play in a style foreign to that of Chamber Music.

A brief extract from the third movement will explain the matter:—

EX. 132.

It will be seen at first glance that the first viola is here treated as a solo instrument, and that the functions of the other five strings are wholly subordinate. But the whole passage is most effective, and suggests a wood-wind melody

supported by soft harmonies on the brass, and *pizzicato* chords on the strings, to those who are acquainted with some of the most familiar forms of procedure in orchestration. This kind of thing, which is certainly more legitimate in a sextet than it would be in a quartet, may not be the best model in style. It has, nevertheless, the merit of great clearness, and the charm of piquancy. Moreover, it is instructive, inasmuch as it contributes one more proof of the usefulness of that never-failing device, the division of the instruments into three distinct groups—the viola solo, the two violins and first 'cello, the second viola and second 'cello having each their own pulsation and design. Of a different nature to anything yet quoted is a strange feature of the slow movement from the same work, manifested in the four bars given below.

EX. 133.



The rapidly repeated notes and the elaborately marked gradations have a very notable effect when played, as directed, at the point of the bow. In the third and fourth bars the sudden changes from *mf* to *pp* are strikingly effective and novel.

Concerning septets for stringed instruments alone, the useful and very exhaustive bibliography of *Kammermusik-Literatur*, by Professor Altmann of Berlin, records the publication of only one, this solitary specimen being the work of H. Molbe, a modern composer quite unknown at present in England. So it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon a form of writing practically non-existent, though the increased possibilities afforded by the addition of a double-bass to the ordinary sextet combination might well tempt a composer in search of something new to venture into unexplored territory.

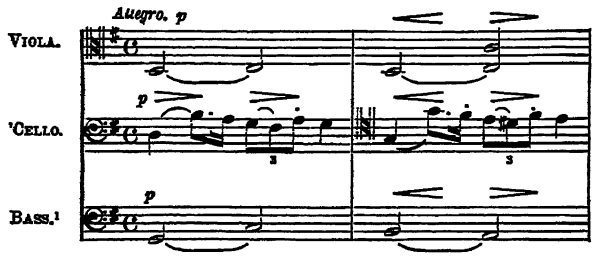
A few words, however, may be fitly said here concerning the use of the double-bass in Chamber Music. The student brought up upon the old conservative treatises will have a positive fear when he comes to write independently for this instrument. He has been taught that in the orchestra it should be used merely to double the 'cellos in the octave below, and thus strengthen the bass part.

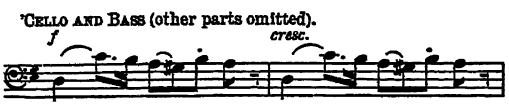
He has grown accustomed to regard it, used in any other way, as a 'fearful wildfowl' whose uncertain and ponderous grunts might lure him to destruction. The fact that it is seldom used as a solo instrument in the orchestra, and seldom heard at all at a chamber concert, renders this ignorance to some

extent excusable. A few general hints may be given. The high notes are not very strong, nor is their quality generally very attractive. The strings being long and thick, passages of great rapidity are not often effective, even if quite possible in the hands of an accomplished player: the thicker the string, the slower the changes of speed in vibration are effected, and, on the lowest strings especially, a confused muttering will be substituted for clear articulation if very quick notes are written. Double notes are hardly ever given by composers to the double-bass, nor will the need of them be felt. Natural harmonics can sometimes be used with effect—but not artificial harmonics, which are impracticable. Mutes are rarely employed, as their attachment to the instrument makes only a very slight difference in tone-quality. It is extremely important that the double-bass, especially in Chamber Music, should not be used incessantly, for this would render the composition exceedingly heavy and ponderous. Rests and detached and staccato notes are necessary on almost every page, unless any specially cumbersome colouring is designedly intended. The *pizzicato* of the instrument is extraordinarily telling, and can often be used to accentuate the chief notes of a bass-passage played by the 'cello. The strings of the double-bass are so long that these plucked notes possess considerable sustaining power and resonance, and are far more valuable to the composer than those of instruments of higher pitch.

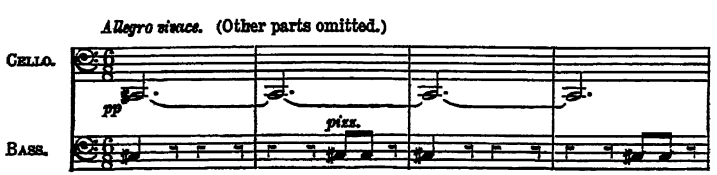
The chief difficulty in writing for the double-bass in such a work as a string quintet is to know how to use it as an absolute bass-part supporting the whole fabric, and to decide when it should double the bass of the 'cello in the octave below, and when it is more suitably employed in lightly accentuating an essential outline by playing an occasional isolated note.

Generally speaking, absolute independence is more likely to be effective in *piano* passages, especially when only a few instruments require to be supported, than in episodes where strength is demanded.

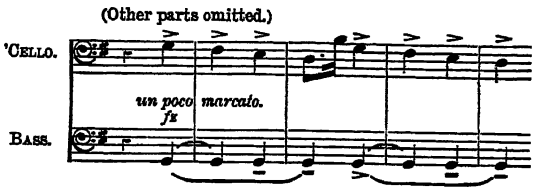
EX. 134.

In the above extract from Dvořák's Quintet in G, Op. 77 (already alluded to on page 131), the double-bass is quite sufficient for its purpose. But later in the work, when the same theme develops and becomes the lowest part of a *forte* passage, the 'cello and double-bass share it in octaves:—

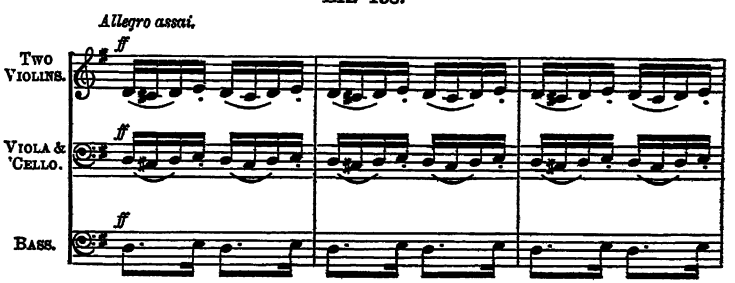
EX. 135.

Three further illustrations may be given from the same composition, in which different methods of dealing with the instrument are revealed.

In the first the 'cello is seen holding a low pedal C sharp, whilst the bass repeats the same note *pizzicato* at irregular intervals, after the manner of the taps on a drum.

EX. 136.

[1] The double-bass part is always written an octave higher than it is played.

In the second the double-bass has a pedal-note, not held but arranged with slurred and connected repetitions, and only occasional changes of bow. It will be noted that this part begins two octaves below the 'cello, which plays an independent passage, and it has somewhat the effect of a low organ pipe. Such devices are very effective for occasional use, but only in inverse proportion to the frequency with which they are employed.

EX. 137.

The third and last illustration gives a good idea of a suitable way of using the double-bass in a quick unison passage, *fortissimo*; the movement here being too rapid to be effectively played exactly as it is on the other instruments, a simplified version, preserving the accents, is all-sufficient for the occasion.

EX. 138.

For further instances of the effective use of the double-bass in Chamber Music, the student is referred to the examples on pages 288, 291, and 295.

The string octet (four violins, two violas, and two 'cellos) has found four notable exponents in Mendelssohn, Raff, Gade,

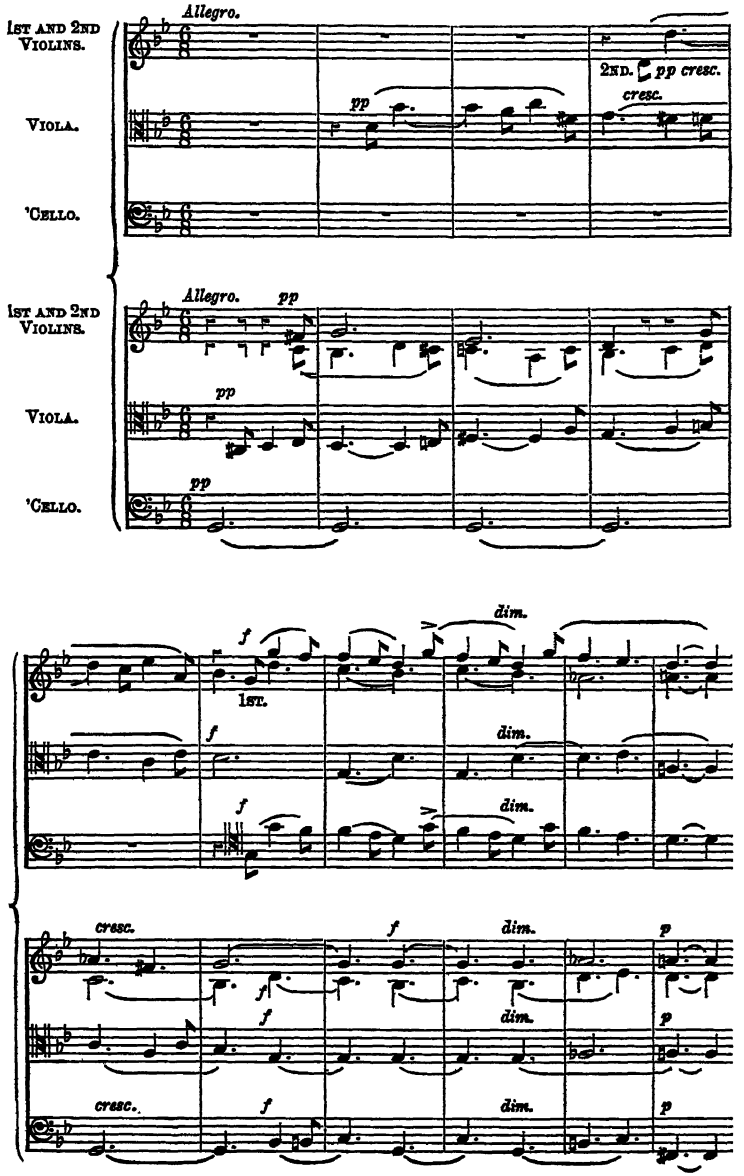
and Svendsen, each composer having produced one example. Beyond this the form has been practically unexploited, and offers few attractions to the composer, who would generally find apter machinery for any ideas that such a combination might suggest in the ordinary stringed orchestra, where the addition of double-basses would decidedly be an attraction. Such large combinations, even when handled with mastery, must inevitably be somewhat orchestral in their tendency, and can never afford quite the same scope for delicacy, and the true individuality of the players, as works in which the number of performers is limited more strictly. The most effective moments in Mendelssohn's Octet are undoubtedly those in which the insistence on the massive eight-part structure is allowed to cease, as in the fanciful Scherzo, where rests are freely used, and the phrases are broken up and scattered about the score.

Setting aside octets, some very interesting experiments were made by Spohr, who, recognising the real limitations of Chamber Music if not all its possibilities, hit upon the happy idea of writing what he called "double-quartets." In these works the eight instruments were not employed in one large block, so to speak, but were used antiphonally in two separate groupings of four instruments each. It is a pity that the idea was not adopted and extended by some later composers, for Spohr, with all his brilliance, was hardly the man to carry any form to its ultimate climax of perfection.

The following brief extract from one of these double-quartets (that in G minor, Op. 136) will show that, if not always profoundly inspired, the music has moments of polyphonic freedom, and is beautifully designed.

Amongst other features, the felicitous employment of the first violin and 'cello of the first quartet, in octaves, may be noted.

In bringing this chapter to a close, a final piece of advice, perhaps in itself little more than reiteration, may be vouchsafed, since no more comments will be offered in this volume upon the separate art of writing for strings alone. Strong stress has already been laid upon the importance of realising

EX. 139.

1ST AND 2ND VIOLINS.
VIOLA.
'CELLO.
Allegro.
pp
2ND.
pp cresc.
cresc.
1ST AND 2ND VIOLINS.
Allegro.
pp
VIOLA.
pp
'CELLO.
pp
f
dim.
1ST.
cresc.
p

the subtle differences in the tone colour of the various instruments of the violin family, since, being so subtle, they are the more likely to be disregarded. The more lines the composer has to his score, and the more duplications of instruments he admits, the less likely is he to find it possible to accentuate those differences in any appreciable degree. If he will learn first in the best school let him study the string quartet or the string trio, where the three distinct and different-toned instruments are bound together in a slender web of sound of which each thread is in itself clearly defined. By this means he will be more likely to gain a true understanding of the value of those separate factors, and so maintain a reasoned balance, and the real Chamber Music spirit, when he comes to deal with the larger forms which have just been described. Not that quartets and trios are easier of attainment. Far from it. There are few composers who would not declare that it is more difficult to write a string quartet than a symphony. It is simply a question of settling the elemental bases of things before beginning to build a superstructure.

It is, of course, a most ridiculous commonplace to say that one must walk before one can run. But even commonplaces must be repeated sometimes, lest they lose their reputation as commonplaces and are regarded eventually with distrust—as obvious pieces of wisdom, not staled by age and assaulted by vulgar usage, invariably are!

CHAPTER VI.

STRINGS WITH PIANOFORTE.

I.

Duet-sonatas.

As explained in the first chapter of this book no attempt will be made to deal with methods and requirements concerning the composition of solo works. Duets for one stringed instrument and piano are, ~~however,~~ a very important branch of concerted Chamber Music upon which some comments must be made, and inasmuch as the modern form of the sonata for violin and piano grew, to a large extent, out of the earlier solo sonatas for violin of such composers as Corelli, Locatelli, Tartini, and Handel, it will be profitable for us to become acquainted with the methods of writing therein embodied.

With J. S. Bach the solo violin sonata reached a kind of culmination, though the structural elements of his works in this category differ considerably from those adopted at a later day. It happened that, almost contemporaneously, the Italian composer, Domenico Scarlatti, began devoting his energies to the composition of solo sonatas for Clavier which, thus embarked upon, were destined almost entirely to supplant violin sonatas for many years. A certain contemplation of the early keyboard sonatas will therefore, in a similar way, be found a good preparation for the serious study of later methods. Without going further into the question of historical developments—in which Clavier writers such as Carl Philip Emanuel Bach and Domenico Paradies played an even greater part than the violinist-composers of the previous generations—it will suffice to record

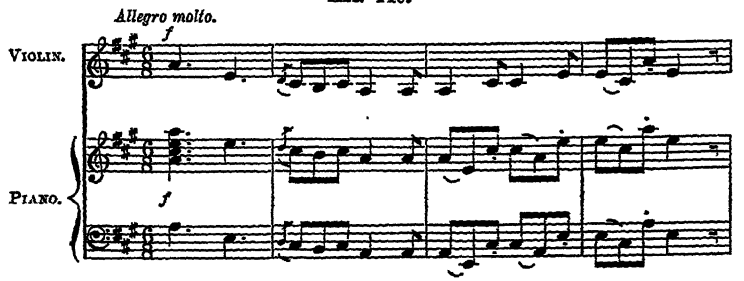
that it was not until the advent of Mozart that the duet-sonata as we now know it (a combination of well-contrived balance, in which the musical interest is shared equally), came into being.

The duet-sonatas of Mozart, though by no means reaching the high level of his string quartets and quintets, are, nevertheless, works from which modern aspirants may learn a good deal concerning the relative values of piano and stringed-instrument tone, which is such a highly important matter in works of this kind. If the passages then given to the keyboard instrument were of slighter and more fragile build than one is accustomed to expect nowadays, it must be remembered that Mozart was a harpsichord player rather than a pianist, that the piano was not generally considered to have superseded the harpsichord at the time when these works were produced, and that compositions of that date (and even later times) were invariably designed to be suitable for performance upon either instrument. And it may be freely admitted that the greatly increased tonal volume of the grand piano ~~of to-day~~ has by no means proved an unmixed blessing for duet ensemble works. Whereas the violin has stayed precisely as it was, the piano has become so powerful an instrument that its use in conjunction with a single string has become a ~~far more~~ difficult matter to cope with ~~than many modern composers, even~~ great masters, ~~have fully realised~~.

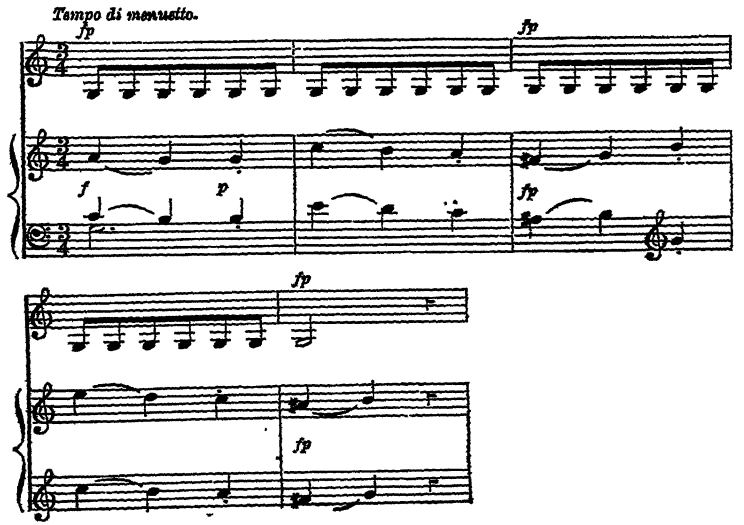
For these and other reasons it will be wholesome to devote some attention to a few of the features displayed in the Mozart sonatas, which are eighteen in number.

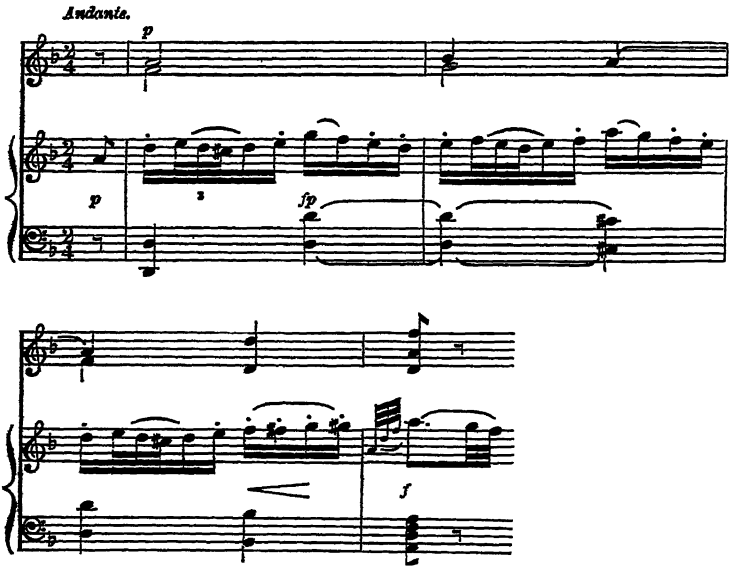
The influence of their slighter texture cannot fail to be beneficial, and help to counteract any tendency on a beginner's part to overload his piano part with noisy passages, the playing of which will seriously obscure the tone of the poor struggling violinist, however penetrating it may be. Moreover, as in the case of the string quartets, these sonatas of Mozart show forth, in small space, and with no elaborations, almost all the best primary devices for combining the two factors that are available. At the opening of the Sonata, No. 1,[1] we find a forcible subject in A major.

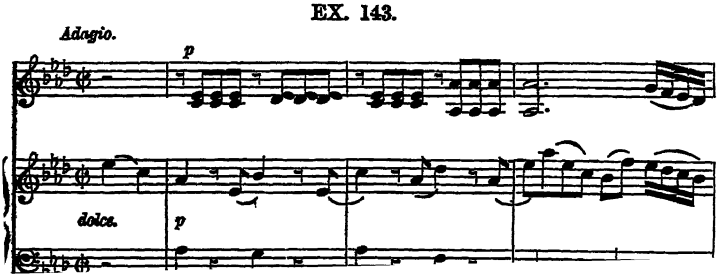
[1]The numbers quoted are those of the Peters Edition.

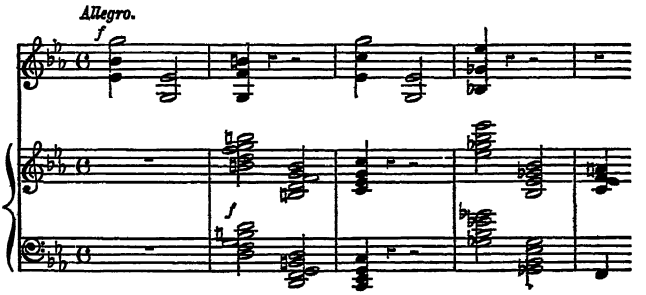
EX. 140.

The older masters were generally very careful not to write passages in *unison* for piano and violin. Instead, they contrived that the piano should double the melody, when it was to be doubled, either at the octave above or below, or, as in the above example, both. An equally instructive instance may be found at the beginning of the Sonata, No. 4, in C major, where there is a similar arrangement, the violin here playing in the highest octave.

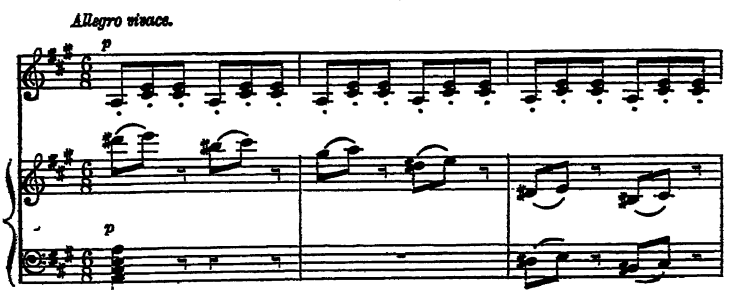
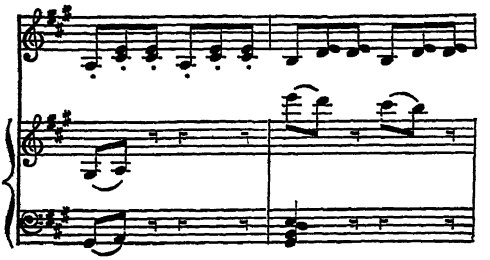
Sometimes, but more rarely, the stringed instrument provides a kind of pedal-bass. An effective passage in which this plan is adopted may be found in the Minuet of the Sonata, No. 2.

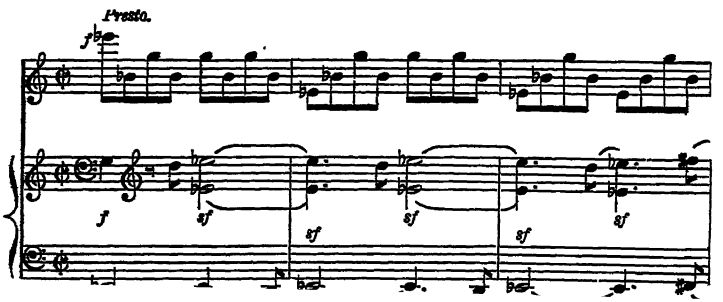
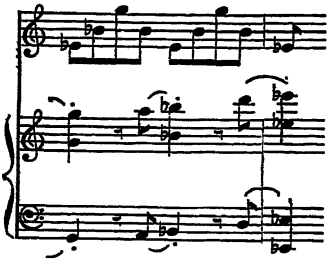
EX. 141.

The violin may also, on occasion, be utilised to complete the harmonies by playing double notes whilst the piano has the highest and lowest parts of the design, as in one of the variations from the Sonata, No. 9, in F major.

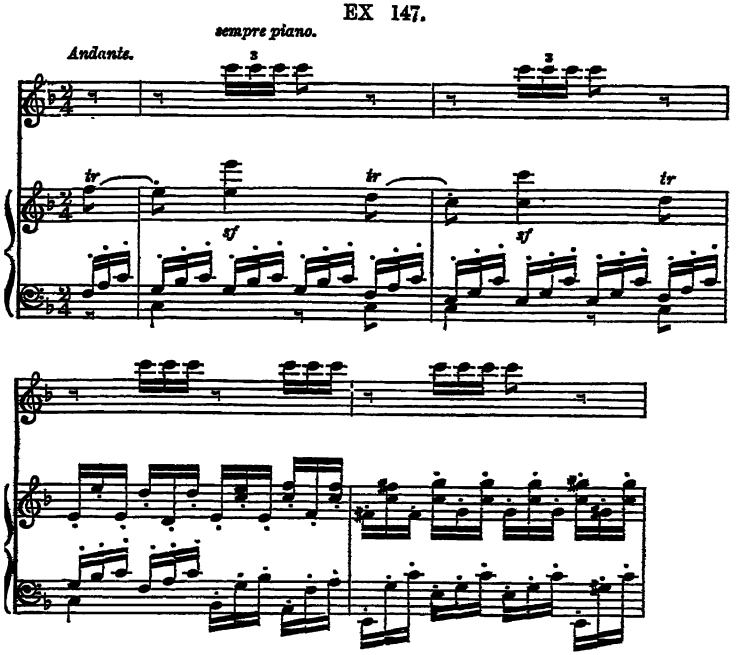
EX. 142.

Repeated chords, merely used as accompaniment in this way, are not so effective, and hardly admissible in modern music, though Mozart gives many instances of the kind, one being the opening treatment of the theme of the Adagio in the Sonata, No. 16, in E flat.

EX. 143.

On the other hand heavy chords, piano answering violin, are most effective, and show a useful way of dealing with the problems of rhythm and grip. After the first statement of the subject in the opening Allegro of the Sonata, No. 12, we find the following distribution of parts, the energy of which gives a kind of foretaste of the devices employed much later by Beethoven in his introduction to the famous sonata dedicated to Kreutzer.

EX. 144.

Turning from Mozart to Beethoven we find, at first, less advance in resource than might be expected. Indeed, the opening of Beethoven's second sonata (Op. 12, No. 2) shows a quite ineffective distribution of parts. There is nothing in any of the Mozart sonatas quite so badly miscalculated as this:—

EX. 145.

The E flat Sonata, Op. 12, No. 3, certainly exhibits some considerable expansions of the duet idea, and has greater force and breadth of treatment than any of the Mozart sonatas, though it is again spoilt, in all three movements, by many pianistic accompanying figures allotted to the violin. The greatest of the Beethoven works for piano and violin—the Sonatas, Op. 30, No. 2, in C minor; the familiar Op. 45 (known as the "Kreutzer"); and the last serenely beautiful work in G major, Op. 96—have few, if any, such disfigurements. The interest is evenly divided between the instruments. Almost all the accompanying passages here are thematic and have a special independent *contour*. Even where, in the first movement of the "Kreutzer," mere arpeggios are employed, they have a majestic sweep across the strings which is of very different importance from the cold chord-figures last quoted;

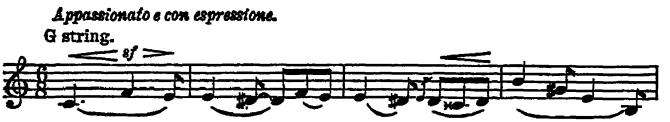
EX. 146.

and who does not remember the first of those wonderful variations, in the same work, with its fascinating chirp of the little violin figure accompanying the richly varied version of the theme played by the piano? The fancifully inclined might imagine that here the violinist was whispering gentle approval to all the beautiful things the pianist was telling him!

EX 147.

So many changes, not only of mood but of method, were brought about with the ascendancy of what is commonly called

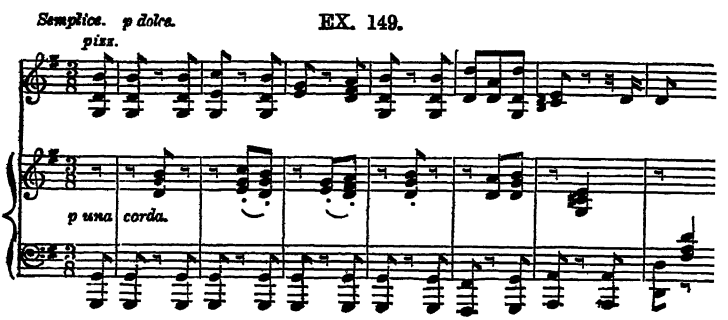
the Romantic School that it may be well to pass on quickly to consider the sonatas of Schumann and Brahms. We must remember that both of these composers had the modern grand piano, as we now know it, to deal with, and that this instrument surpassed in depth of tone-quality and sustaining power the pianos of Beethoven's day. Apart from this we find subject-matter of a different character, and a more agitated and less formal type of development.

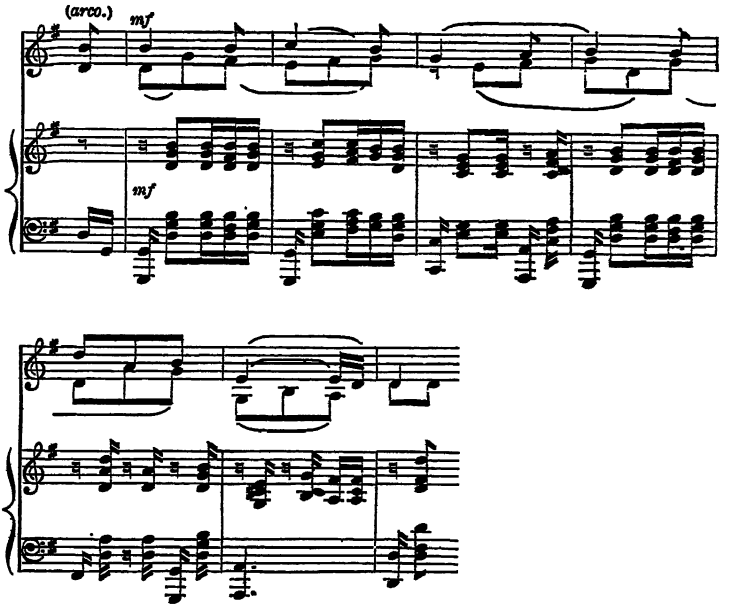
Schumann's two Sonatas for Violin and Piano in A minor and D minor (Op. 105 and Op. 121) are most poetic, and are tinged with truly romantic feeling.

The first movement of that in A minor has a very warm subject given first on the G string of the violin, with the accompaniment of agitated figures in semiquavers:—

EX. 148.

The piano later responds, and the Allegro as a whole is a masterpiece of sustained passion and energy, though, technically it is marred by a too frequent use of the violin in absolute unison with the piano.

In the D minor Sonata there is a wonderful movement which begins in quite a new way. The violin has a tender and most beautiful melody which is played in chords, *pizzicato*, the piano, *una corda*, giving support.

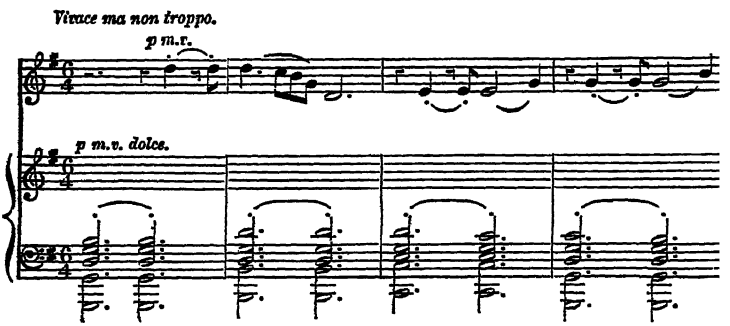
EX. 149.

This would hardly seem the most suitable way of stating such a delicately expressive theme, and it is very difficult to interpret effectively. But it is only the beginning of a cunningly contrived *crescendo* of interest. The melody is given three times without break, each statement bringing forth more clearly its exquisite lyrical qualities. When it occurs for the third time the violin has some smooth part-playing of its own,[1] and the piano a characteristic accompanying figure.

EX. 150.

We must lament that Schumann gave us no further duet sonatas, but the seed of the new style had been sown, and in Brahms we find this spirit of true romanticism more than worthily continued. The three Sonatas for Violin and Piano of Brahms are amongst the most interesting of his achievements,

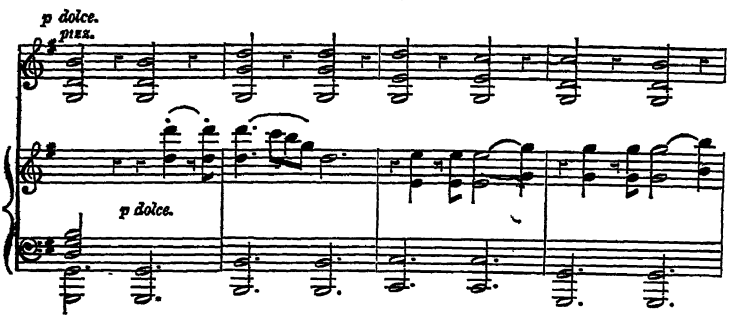
[1] Another excellent example of expressive double-stopping may be found at the end of the Adagio in Brahms's G major Sonata, Op. 78.

and in them are many extensions of the ideas practically ini tiated by Schumann. Throughout his sonatas we can observ how careful he is to make all his passage-work and most of hi melodies of such design that they are capable of being suitabl played by either instrument. At the beginning of his firs Sonata, in G major, Op. 78, for instance, we have a suav melody of most entrancing beauty:—

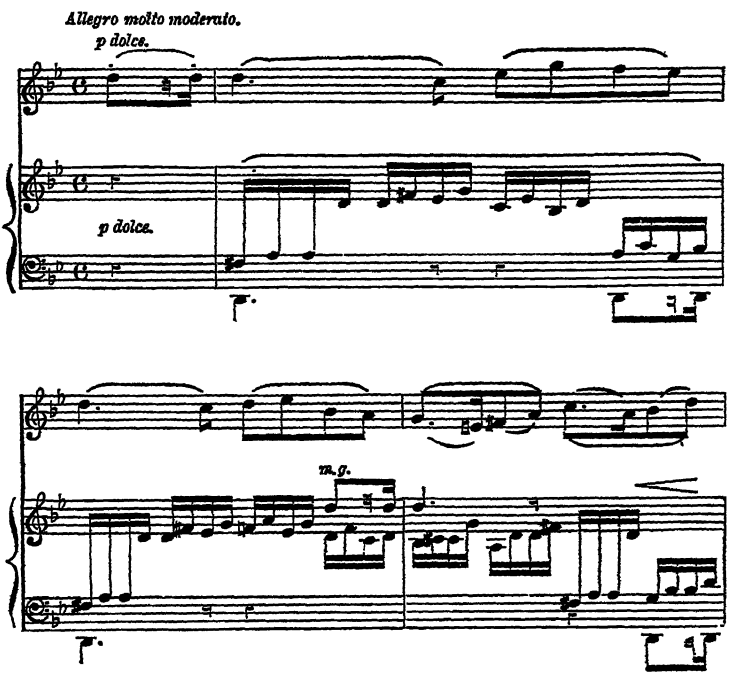
EX. 151.



On its return we find the piano playing this melody, whilst the violin imparts a new significance to the accompanying chords by playing them in the manner invented by Schumann for his Op. 121 (Ex. 149).

EX. 152.

Incidentally the student may be warned against too frequently trying to pit the piano against the violin by transferring a sustained melody to the keyboard after it has been sung by the bowed strings. The pianist is certain to suffer by comparison unless—as in the case of the Brahms subject quoted above—he has a theme consisting of broken phrases, and peculiarly suited to the piano; for it is impossible for him with the best tone in the world, to produce a *sostenuto* effect at all comparable with that performed by the violinist.

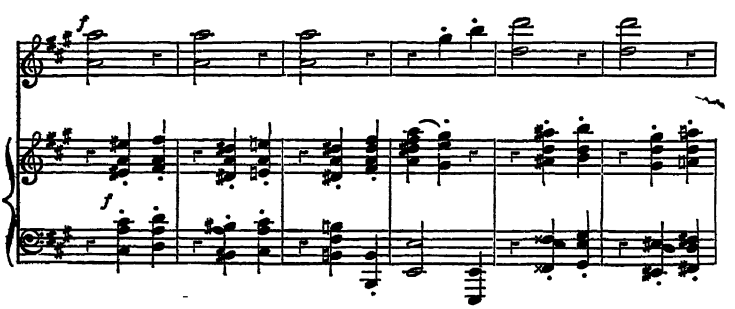
In the Finale of the same sonata we see a similar idea presented in a still more subtle manner.

EX. 153.

This time the piano at once seizes upon the opening phrase of three notes, and uses it first below and afterwards above the

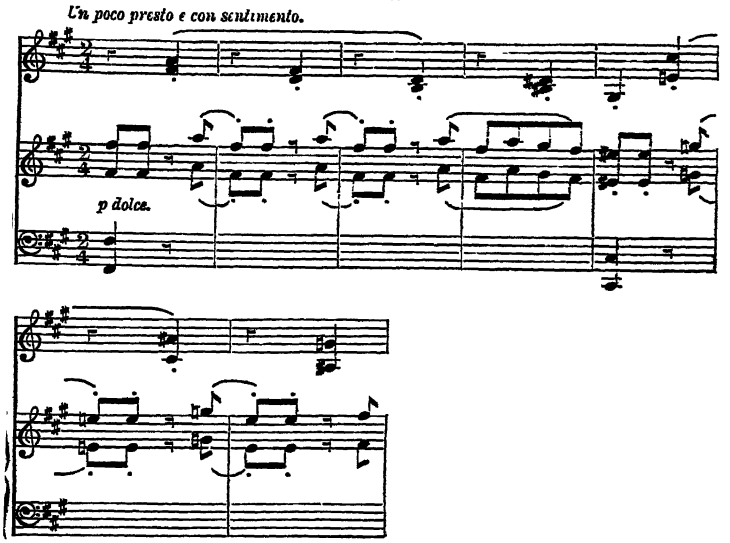
semiquaver passage of accompaniment. But what is even more interesting is the way in which Brahms utilises the first phrase of this very accompaniment, and makes quite an important subject of it later on, when the violin changes the character of its melodic line:—

EX. 154.

The second Brahms Sonata, in A major, Op. 100, is also largely both romantic and lyrical in feeling, but it has occasional passages of great force and grip. The following extract will indicate how well the violin may be suited by strong held octaves marking the accents of the bar. It forms a portion of the Coda to the first movement.

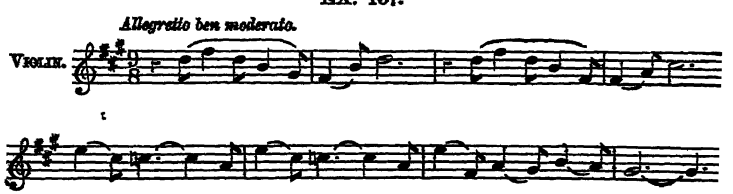
EX. 155.

Grieg, whose duet-sonatas are amongst the most meritorious of his larger works, makes considerable use of this method, as may be seen by reference to his Sonata in C minor, Op. 45.

A single quotation from the last of the Brahms sonatas, that in D minor, Op. 108, will serve to show yet another method of combining the instruments, and a very instructive one.

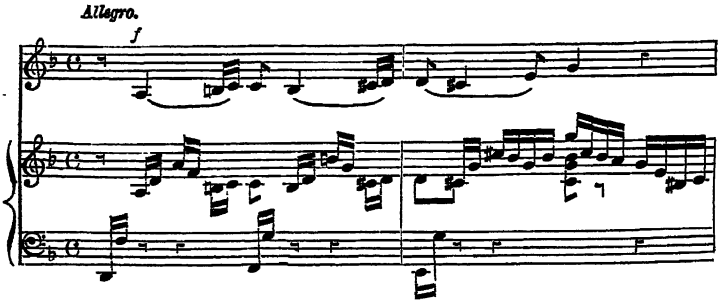
EX. 156.

A most unusual effect is here obtained by giving the actual bass, with the harmonies, to the violin, whilst the piano plays the theme. It is so delicately constructed and perfectly balanced that the result is delightful, but in less expert hands such a distribution of parts would be exceedingly risky.

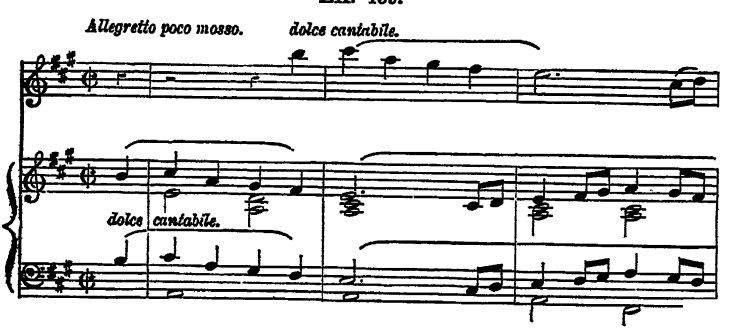
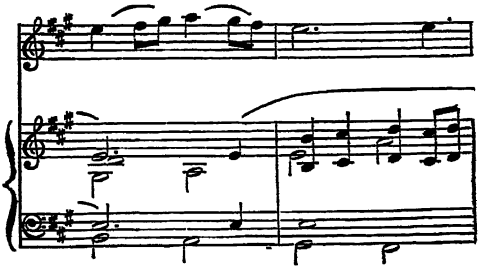
Amongst more modern sonatas for violin and piano the well-known work in A major, by César Franck, takes a very high place. The first movement has something of the calm beauty which belongs to the opening of the G major Sonata of Brahms, and a similar grace in the curvature of the main theme, which, be it noted, is wholly sustained in design, and never given (except in broken sections) to the piano.

EX. 157.

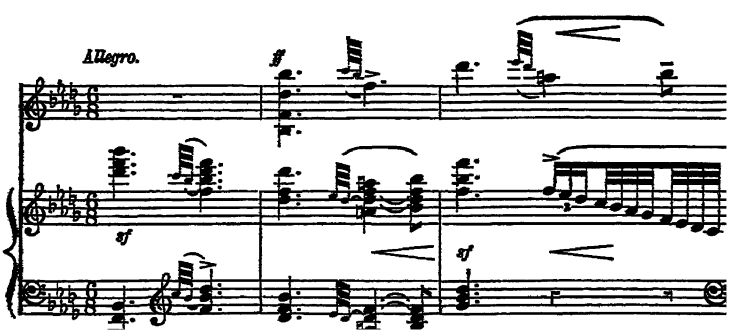
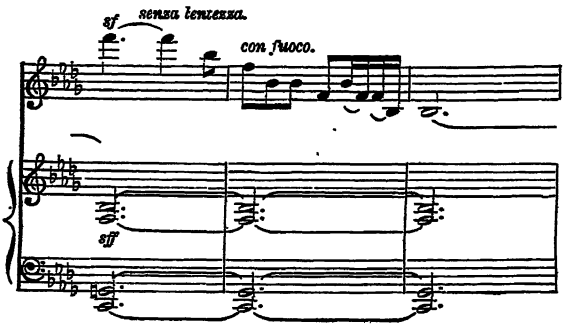


The second movement, with its busy, agitated, and most brilliant piano part, is quite new in feeling. In it may be found a good modern application of an idea not utilised by earlier composers, except perhaps Schumann. The tune, half buried, as it were, in the intricacies of the piano part, is picked out by the violin and given the colour seen below.

EX. 158.

The success of the total effect proves that it is not always necessary to shun writing in unison for violin and piano if the device can be deftly contrived and there is a special purpose in view. In the third section, Recitative-Fantasia, a very modern note is struck in the melodic design, and the boldness of the harmonic progressions. The last movement shows how excellently a subject may be presented in the form of a canon between the two instruments.

EX. 159.

In most quite recent sonatas, of which this fine work is the precursor, a very great freedom of expression and loose rhapsodical technique is displayed. It has doubtless been felt that in earlier times the scope of the string part was allowed to become rather cramped, and that the violin is capable of making a great effect with passages which extend in short space over a large range of its possible compass. In works where there are several stringed instruments employed this idea has not been much exploited, although in the posthumous quartets of Beethoven (which are continually 'giving us the lie' when we try to discuss chronological progress) some amazing flights confront us.

The following quotation from an admirable and most spirited sonata by a modern British composer, John Ireland, is interesting from several points of view:—

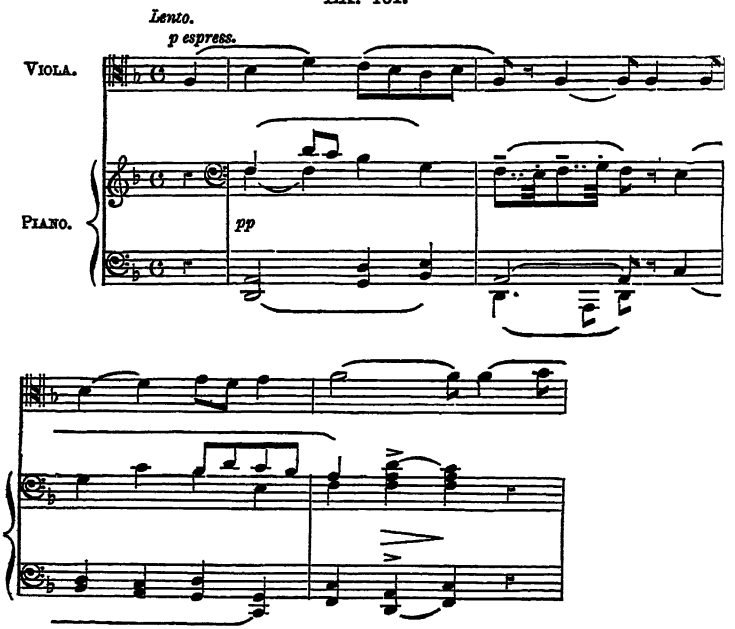
EX. 160.

Here we see the violin soaring to a high F and bounding precipitantly, in the course of two short bars, to its lowest string. The extract also shows, though it may already have been observed, that association with a percussion instrument renders an acutely rhythmic treatment of the violin desirable, in order that the instruments may be better suited to one another in passages where they participate in the presentation of the same idea. The sonatas of G. Fauré, Victor Vreuls, Lekeu, and others, may be profitably consulted, and will afford further evidence upon these points. They are not masterpieces of construction like the works of Beethoven or Brahms, but they show that a certain picturesque rhapsodical freedom, as if both performers were sympathetically extemporising together, is not wholly incompatible with Chamber Music in sonata form. For good or ill the influence of César Franck has been productive of energetic results, with the consequence that most of the sonatas for piano and violin of the present day are no pale reflections of those of past generations, but works charged with a new kind of sensitiveness and alive with restless impetuosity.

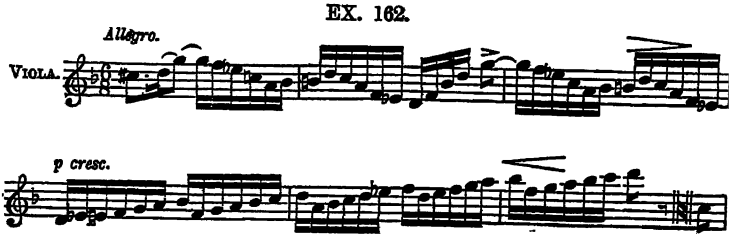
Whilst speaking of these particular traits one may, perhaps, pause here for a moment to consider the special claims of the combination of piano with viola which have been very insistently urged of late. Whereas sonatas for piano and violin have passed through many stages of development, sonatas for piano and viola have really only just begun to exist. It seems strange that the tone of such a beautiful instrument has not

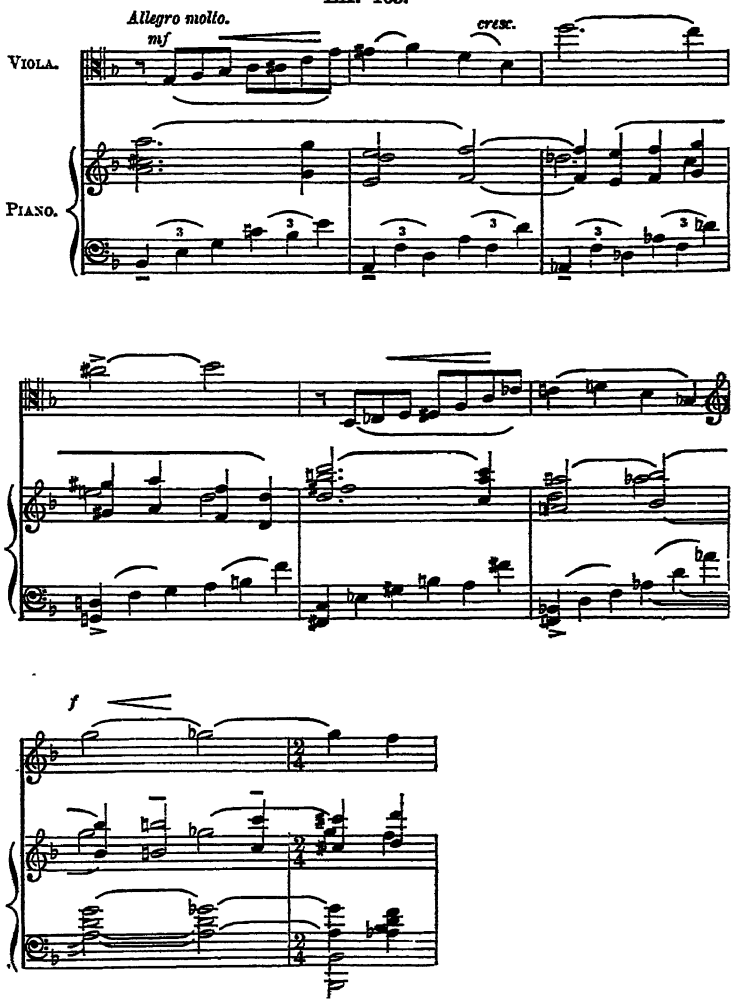
until recently tempted composers to write solo music specially calculated to display its powers. It is true that the viola players of years ago were more often than not inferior violinists who turned their attention to the viola since it was less cultivated, hoping thereby to make a surer livelihood. But the difficult passages written for the instrument by Beethoven and others show that there must have been some extremely skilful executants even in those days. Schumann is practically the only great composer who has written for viola and piano, and his "Märchenbilder" are comparatively insignificant, and of little account as viola music. Now, however, there are abundant signs that this unwarrantable neglect is a thing of the past. In this country the advocacy of Mr. Lionel Tertis, a great artist the eloquence of whose playing gives the viola a unique position as a solo instrument, has found a ready and most gratifying response. It is not too much to say that he has directly inspired some of the most notable British compositions of recent years, and that his performances of these works have convincingly shown that there are still greater heights and depths waiting to be explored. Perhaps the most noteworthy of these additions to the scanty literature of the viola have been contributed by Benjamin J. Dale and York Bowen, two composers who have shown peculiar sympathy and ability for the task. The first-named has composed a Suite for viola and piano of remarkable power, and a Phantasy (Op. 4) for the same combination (longer and more important than most works in this form) which has opened up many new channels of beauty.

This is not an occasion for dwelling upon the merits of Dale's composition apart from its apt recognition of the genius of the viola, but it may be said that his extraordinary grasp of harmonic design (which makes the boldest and most revolutionary modulations appear coherent and inevitable) is no less great than his ability to construct characteristic themes and to preserve the balance between piano and viola. He makes the viola soar in regions hitherto only associated with violin music, but, however brilliant the passages are, they never lose their viola character. He knows the value, too, of the song-like

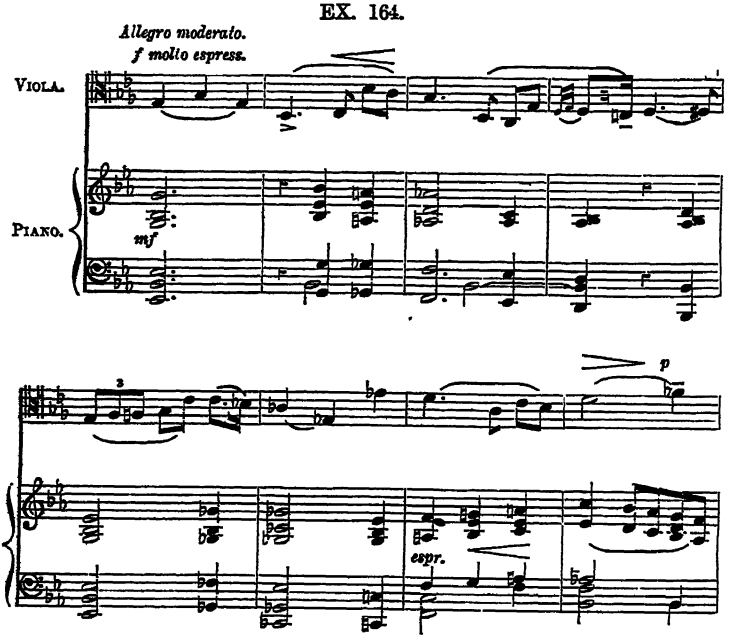
middle tones, as an examination of the broadly diatonic Lento subject of his Phantasy will show.

EX. 161.

How different this would sound on the G string of the violin! On the arrival of the Allegro movement we have chains of passages which, in spite of their high pitch, essentially belong to the viola—the only other instrument that could give them anything approximately like a right interpretation is the clarinet, with which the viola has some kinship of tone and sentiment.

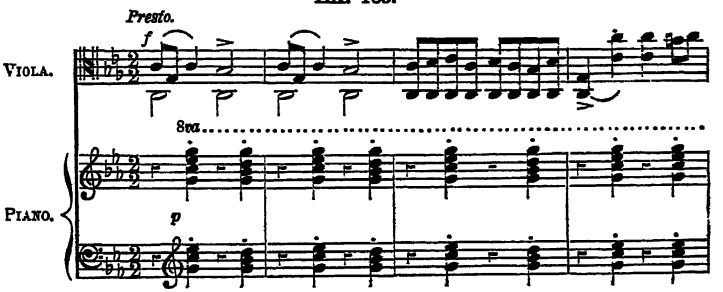
EX. 162.

It is difficult to select isolated points from a work so continuous and unbroken in its interest, but one more quotation may be ventured upon, if only to show how effectively rapid changes from the graver notes to the somewhat penetrating quality of the high register may be negotiated.

EX. 163.

Here, again, the contrasts are far greater than they would be if played by the violin, the high merit of which is a certain uniformity, not of colour but of *colour-value*, throughout its entire range, arising from its more perfect proportions for the pitch to which it is tuned (see page 14).

The two sonatas for piano and viola by York Bowen have many qualities to commend them; there is perhaps a greater tendency towards virtuosity in the viola writing than in the work just discussed, but this very tendency, if producing at times music which falls short of the highest artistic value, results in much successful exploitation of technical possibilities. As an example of the use of the C string in broad melodic writing, we may examine the second subject of the opening movement of the first sonata, which is cast in a sentiment very much suited to the *genre* of the instrument.

EX. 164.

In the last movement, where there is much that is fiery and furious under discussion, we find some other noteworthy

features. The wild subject of this Presto, with its insistence on the open string C, shows once more the special quality of the lower notes, but in a totally opposite manner—bringing out their rather hollow sound and leaving their sentimental proclivities entirely out of the reckoning. The lightly played chords on the piano, between the chief accents, make a very suitable background for this interesting display.

EX. 165.

If some critical or conservative minds are inclined to dispute the right of the viola to interpret virtuoso passages, and to deplore the use of high notes outside its ordinary range, the defence may be readily put forward that no one who is other than an exceptional performer, and able to do with his viola what the viola normally considered cannot do, would attempt the performance of such works as the Bowen sonatas. Technique on every instrument is becoming more highly developed, and if the viola has been overlooked in the past, and considered as an instrument of only limited capacity, any attempt to increase that capacity and show us of what variety it is really capable must be applauded.

The danger is that composers, accustoming themselves to the idea that exceptional instrumentalists are able to play anything that is demanded of them, however unsuitable it may be, may lose sight of the real native characteristics of each instrument and write in a similar style for all. Such productions as quartets and sextets for violas alone (which some enthusiastic worshippers of the instrument have recently

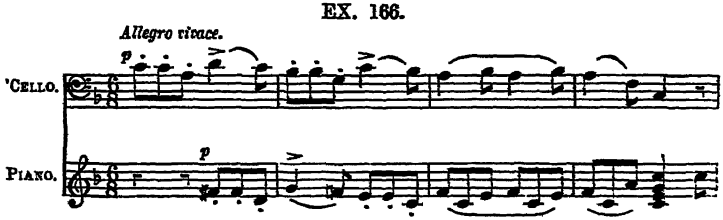
produced) cannot, however clever they are, have much more than a freakish value at the best. They will excite interest, no doubt, but an interest somewhat akin to that aroused by the much-advertised performances on sixty pianos, four hands at each, which were given years ago at the old Westminster Aquarium.

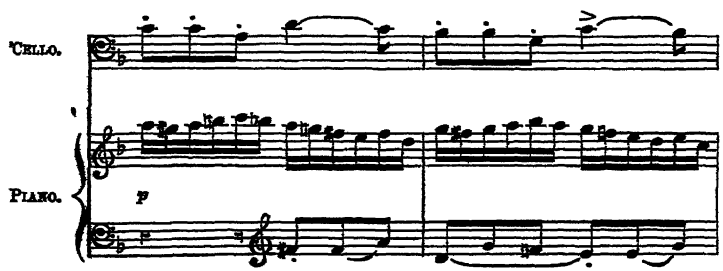
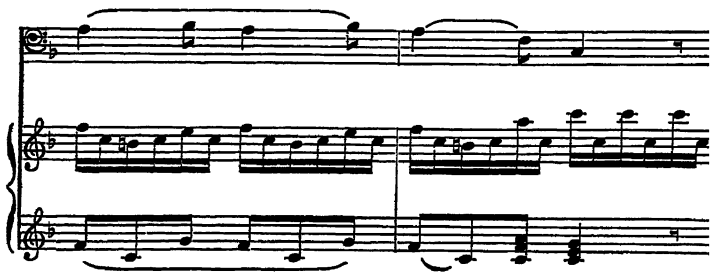
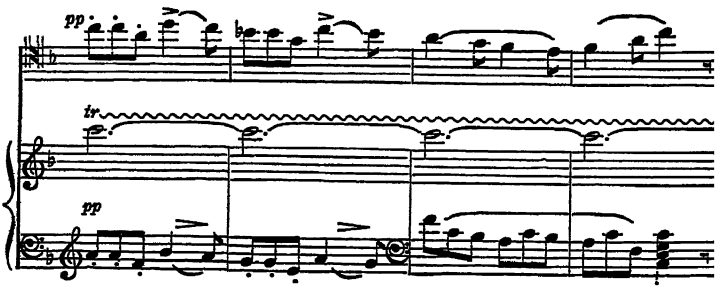
Passing from the viola to the 'cello we find ourselves on more familiar ground, where the footprints of precedent may help to pilot our steps. A well-ordered duet for violoncello and piano is, however, far more difficult to write than might at first be supposed. Not only is the 'cello an instrument of somewhat less varied capabilities than the violin (or indeed the viola), but in rapid passages it is not strong or brilliant, and its tone is in far more danger of being swamped by the piano than that of the other members of its own family. The fault of most 'cello sonatas, particularly those of present-day composers, is the over-elaboration of the pianoforte part, and the undue preponderance of heavy accompanying chords and pedalled arpeggios. It is almost impossible for the 'cellist to make himself heard above the confused mass of sound that most modern pianists delight in, unless he is playing almost throughout high up on the A string.

To write for the 'cello solely in this way is to ignore more than half of its real capabilities. It is not merely a tenor instrument: it has also rich baritone and sonorous bass registers, each with their own special features of beauty. The composer of resource will make use of them all, but confine his pianistic exuberance to the episodes in which the instrument soars to its most telling notes, and even then never go to excess by administering too strong a dose of noise. If this matter is disregarded, the result in performance will be that the 'cellist is forced to play *forte* continuously in order to be heard at all. In many modern sonatas this is what constantly happens, and thus one often hears complaints that 'cello sonatas lack variety, and that the tone becomes tiresome. It is really the *forced* tone of the 'cello that becomes tiresome, for there are ways in which plenty of colour-contrasts and variety may be obtained.

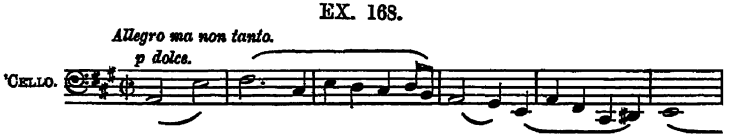
In many respects the early 'cello and piano sonatas of Beethoven are better contrived than any written since, though their musical interest may be, to us, comparatively slight and unimportant. The real problem is to adapt modern harmonic freedom to the ancient methods, and the composer who can succeed in doing this will earn the gratitude of all the 'cellists of his generation. The task has been successfully negotiated in smaller pieces, but very seldom in sonatas, and great executants usually prefer, therefore, to play Bach Suites unaccompanied (if they have serious aspirations), or else (should they minister to popular taste) evanescent trifles utterly unworthy of the dignity of their instrument.

Let us see how Beethoven deals with the situation. In his first Sonata, in F, Op. 5, No. 1, a work too seldom heard, he has chosen an extremely delicate subject for his final Rondo, and this is all the accompaniment he gives to it when it is first stated:—

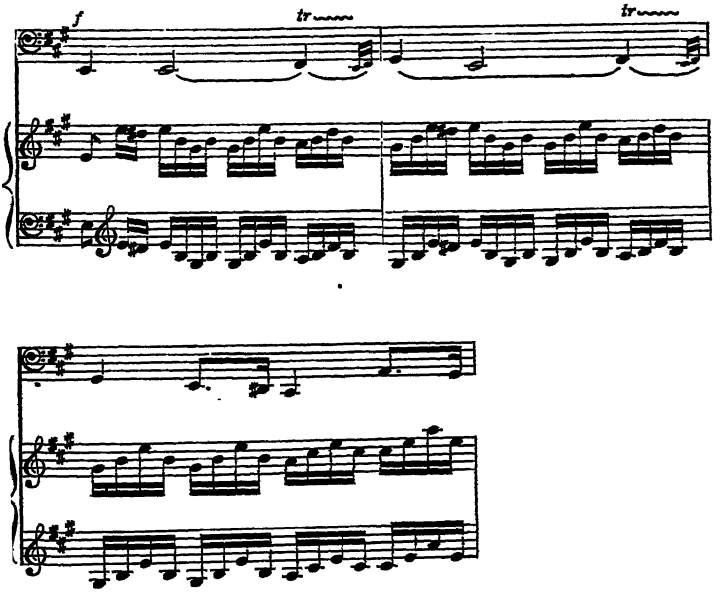
EX. 166.

On its subsequent appearances it is presented in the two following forms:—

EX. 167.

and

It will be seen at a glance that these slender pieces of pianistic network, though interesting in themselves, never for one moment prevent the 'cellist from making the utmost effect with his theme. There is no question here of a struggle to be heard, and every delicate *nuance* which the interpreter's art may dictate will be allowed full play.

For the first subject of Beethoven's Sonata in A major, Op. 69, the 'cello, having a *dolce* theme which is pitched very low, is allowed to make its entry without any support or decoration,

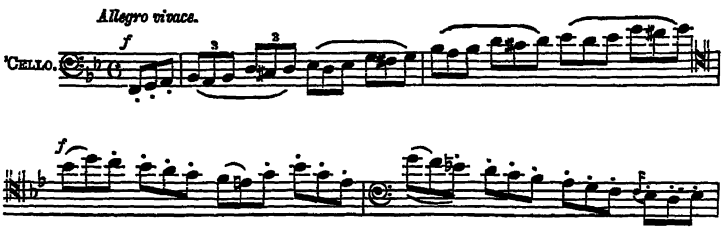
EX. 168.

after which, the low E being held on for several bars, the piano enters to continue the strain, but very quietly and sedately.

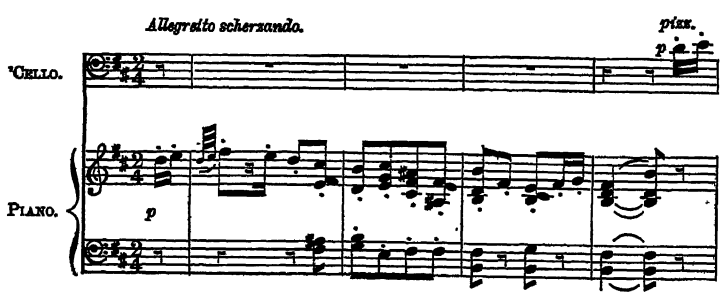
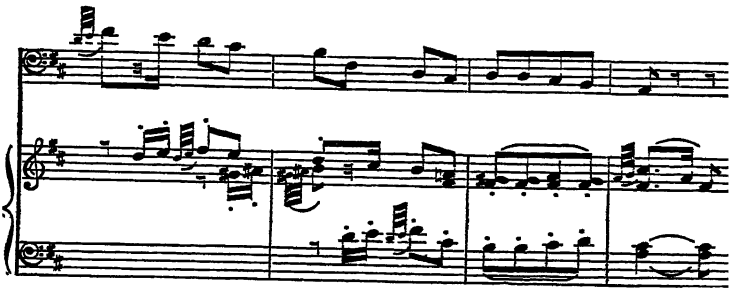
When an episode of more vigour is required Beethoven shows how effective the 'cello may be on its lowest string, and how well adapted it is to play a strong bass part, which will always tell, provided it is not covered up by deep notes of the piano, heavy chords, or widely extensive passages blurred with the pedal.

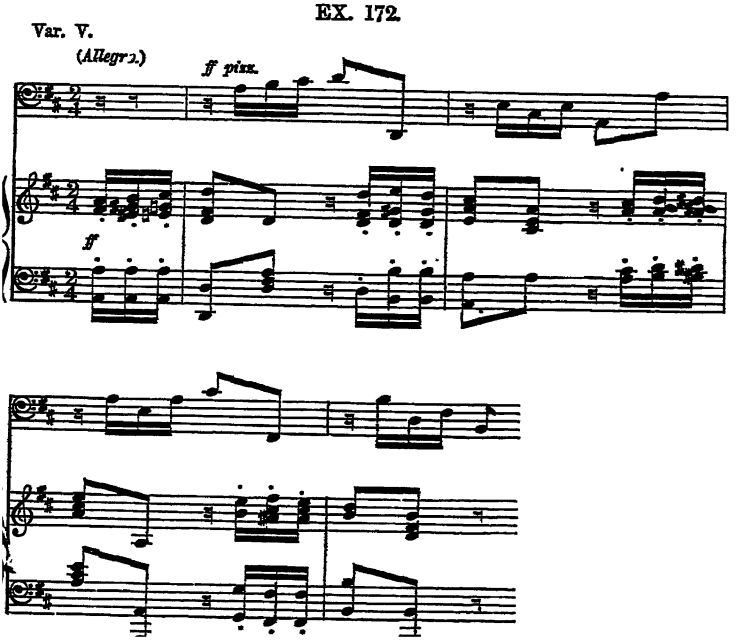
EX. 169.

The two final sonatas for 'cello and piano by Beethoven are emarkable 'third period' works. Their structure, though uite organic, is uncommon, and there is a preponderance of hat curiously fitful and scrappy treatment of the subject-natter which has already been noted in connection with the osthumous quartets. And, as in the case of these quartets, ne hesitates to hold up such methods before the student for mitation.

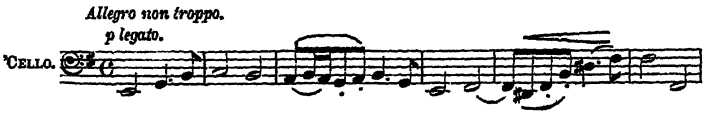
The two sonatas of Mendelssohn, and his Variations for Cello and Piano in D (once so popular, but now scarcely ever

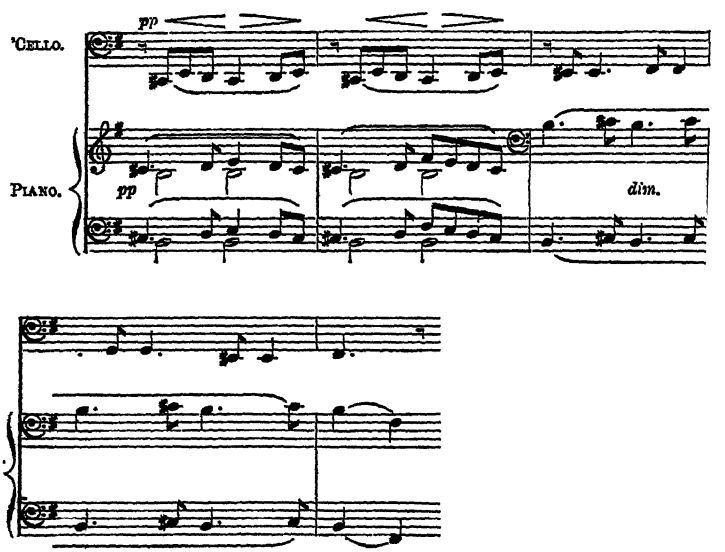
performed), present many features of interest to those in search of technical information. Mendelssohn's natural leaning towards sentimental expression led him, perhaps, to over-emphasise the special aptitude of the 'cello to give such expression prominence. With this reservation one can recommend these works as excellent models. Mendelssohn shows his appreciation of the capabilities of the instrument by using it in all parts of its compass, and by writing passages which effectively display its entire range. The following episode from the opening Allegro of the Sonata in B flat, Op. 45, will bear brief witness to his powers in this direction:—

EX. 170.

His employment of *pizzicato* notes is also extremely happy, especially in a dainty Scherzando subject in his Sonata in D, Op. 58, which seems, once more, to come direct from fairyland.

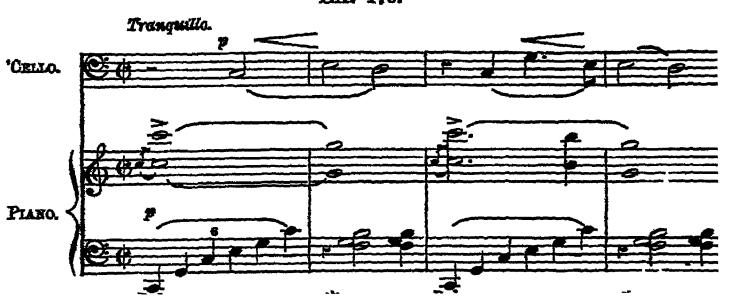
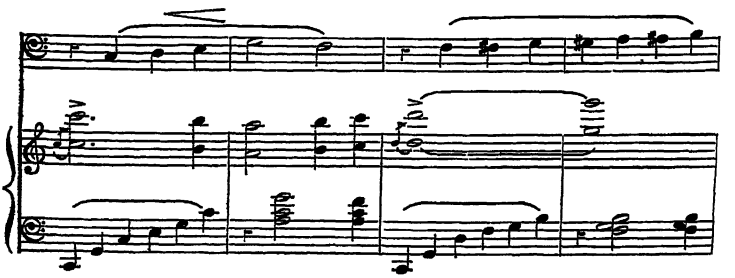
EX. 171.

Another instance of the use of *pizzicato*, almost as striking as the foregoing, may be seen in the Variations for 'Cello and Piano, Op. 17, by the same composer. Here the notes are *fortissimo*, and are very telling indeed if the pianist does not obey Mendelssohn's directions and play *fortissimo* also. No 'cellist could be heard above his companion unless the latter consented to moderate his transports, but the passage, given a well-balanced rendering, is quite a successful experiment.

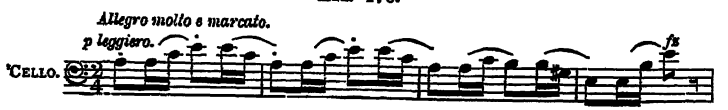
EX. 172.

It is perhaps curious that Brahms, coming after Mendelssohn, should go back to a somewhat more limited view of the 'cello's aptitude. In his Sonata in E minor, Op. 38, he makes little use of the upper part of the compass of the instrument, and uses no *very* high notes throughout. Brahms, indeed, seems almost to over-appreciate the somewhat sombre character of the two lowest strings. The principal subject of the first movement has this colour:—

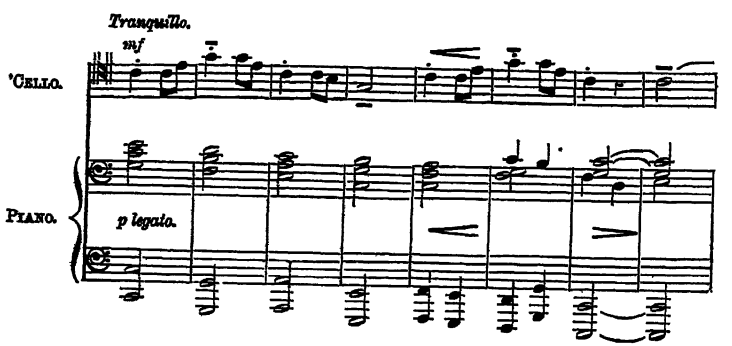
EX. 173.

He uses the 'cello as a bass instrument below the piano part very frequently—and always with discretion. It is not easy to write a piano part above such low notes as this without upsetting the true poise of the music:—

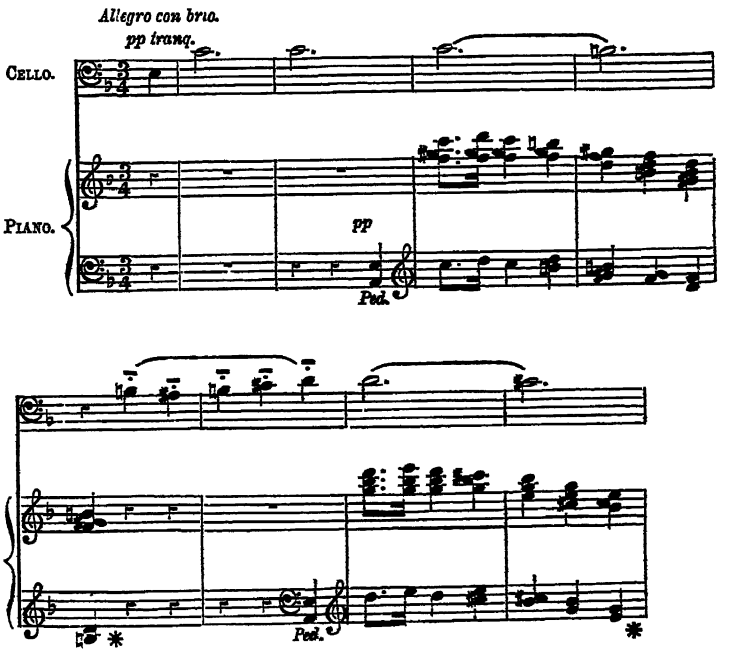
EX. 174.

Here it is most ably done, but the effect is grey and cold. In consequence of the constant use of low notes of both instruments, Brahms's sonatas for 'cello and piano are a little too gloomy in tone for most audiences, and have suffered in popularity thereby. The F major Sonata, Op. 99, though more enterprising as regards the compass and scope of the 'cello part, is less happily inspired as a composition than its companion, and is one of the least grateful of Brahms's chamber works.

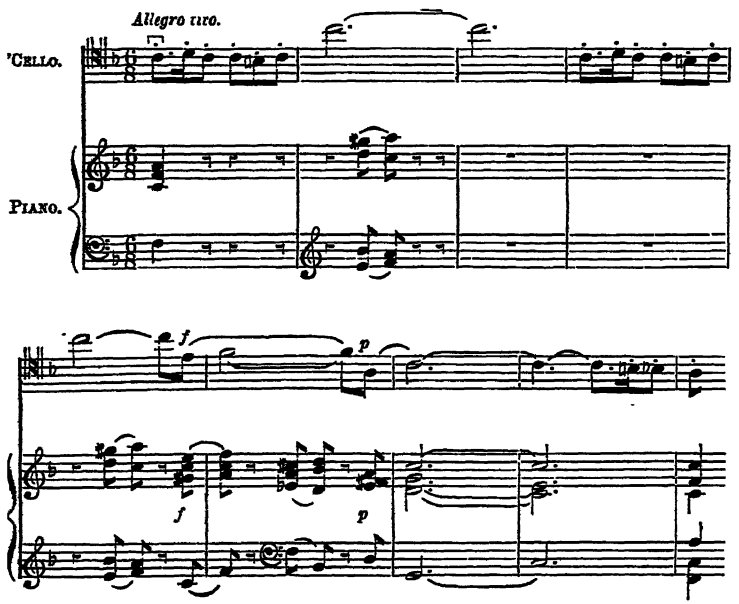
Other notable modern sonatas for this combination are those of Grieg in A minor, Op. 36, and Richard Strauss in F, Op. 6. The Grieg sonata, though orchestral in places and burdened with an excessively strenuous and brilliant pianoforte part, is a most romantic composition, in which the beauty of tone and executive peculiarities of the 'cello are fully realised. Here there is certainly no monotony of treatment. Low notes, middle notes, and high notes are all utilised with effect; there are brilliant passages crossing the strings, strong chords forcibly used, and an uniformly felicitous treatment of *cantilena*, declamation, and dainty *pizzicato*. Though not by any means a good model as a sonata—for there is too much mere repetition and scarcely any attempt at development—much may be learnt from it in the matter of tonal variety and resource. There are few better instances of the use of the 'cello as a middle voice than that shown in the second subject of the first movement, where the piano has a quiet and flowing melody:—

EX. 175.

In the vigorous and somewhat highly-coloured Finale, Grieg again shows his mastery by giving us a sprightly little tune which is delightful on the 'cello:—

EX. 176.

and then, later, the same idea is transformed into a wistful second-subject, where the 'cellist, with a separate bow for each note, can display a simple feeling and charming sentiment which is exactly suited to the genius of his instrument, whilst he is not tempted to err on the side of exaggerated expression.

EX. 177.

The Richard Strauss sonata is an early, and perhaps not a very exalted or distinctive work. But it is especially interesting in view of the fact that, unlike most modern writers, Strauss has borne in mind from first page to last the danger of overloading the accompaniment. He frequently makes the 'cello subject-matter stand by itself, the piano entering when notes are held, as in the following quotation from the first movement, where the 'cellist may play as softly as he pleases without fear of being overborne :—

EX. 178.

In the last movement, too, we find some very discreet handling of material in a light *spiccato* theme leaping to the high C, which occurs many times, and is always clearly heard.

EX. 179.

If the student will resolve to learn the lessons which such passages as these so intelligently teach, he will be saved from the disastrous blemishes which disfigure most of the Chamber Music for 'cello and piano of recent times. In striving to unite two unequal forces, there is only one way by which a true coalescence can be attained. It is useless for the weaker to struggle against the stronger—the stronger must show one real and most serviceable quality of its true strength, the ability to subdue itself. By this means, and this only, ~~can the problem be satisfactorily~~ solved. The piano and the violoncello are not ill-matched if we accept the piano as the stronger partner, and exact from it some measure of chivalry in behaviour. Subservience is not needed—~~indeed, it is contrary to the spirit of concerted music~~—but a way can be found to ensure a happy dependence in which each seems to aid the other, and the value of neither is lost.

To seek it is a worthy aim: to achieve it will be an accomplishment which will add distinction to the work of any composer, however great and seemingly sufficient his imaginative faculties in their unbridled condition may be.

CHAPTER VII.

STRINGS WITH PIANOFORTE.

II.

Trios, Quartets, and Quintets.

If Haydn must be regarded as the first seriously-to-be considered writer of String Quartets, to Mozart should be ascribed the honour of having been the first to compose satisfactory concerted sonata movements for piano, violin, and violoncello. Haydn wrote thirty-five trios for this combination but few of them can really be regarded as trios at all in the modern sense, for in most the 'cello part does little more than strengthen the harmony by doubling the lowest notes of the left hand piano part, and seldom has an independent melodic line of its own. It has been said that the majority of these works were written for a patron who played the 'cello, but played it very poorly, and could only render a part written in the simplest possible manner.

Mozart's works in this form, though by no means remarkably representative compositions, show a distinct advance, from the constructive standpoint, upon those of his great contemporary. Truth to tell, the pianoforte trio is one of the most difficult forms of work to manipulate, and is seldom entirely satisfactory in balance. If the violin and the 'cello (in its higher register) play constantly a kind of duet, with the piano accompanying, no great skill is required, but this plan and the device adopted by Haydn are the only really easy methods of procedure. Unless the music is very soft and gentle, an independent bass part on the 'cello, supporting both its

companions, is always insufficient in strength. If the violin is playing brilliantly and *forte*, and the piano has a firm or florid accompaniment, the 'cello will be absolutely wasted if it is playing low or moderately low notes. One of the worst sins in the composition of Chamber Music is to throw one's material away—and in a trio a 'cello part that is not heard is one of the most common instances of indulgence in that sin.

It is not, of course, possible to tabulate all the available modes of treatment where united strength is needed, but a few may be suggested.

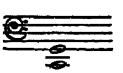
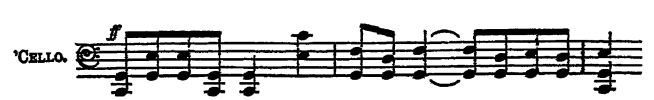
I. Using the stringed instruments singly in clear and strong phrases answering one another, the piano accompanying.

II. The violin and 'cello playing together an octave, or perhaps two octaves, apart, the piano accompanying (see page 203).

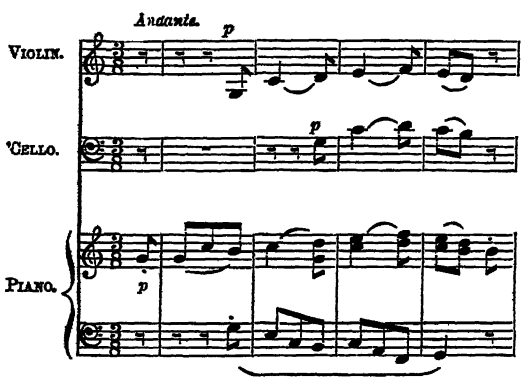
III. The 'cello melodically treated on the A string, the violin supporting with held chords or octaves, or supplying occasional *sforzando* chords of three or four notes (*arco* or *pizzicato*) at intervals, marking the accents.

IV. Violin melodies, with piano accompaniment, the 'cello supplying *sforzando* chords of three or four notes (*arco* or *pizzicato*) at intervals, marking the accents.

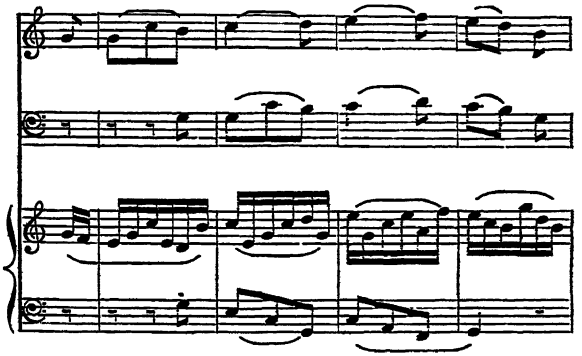
V. The piano playing the melody (harmonised or in rhythmic unison) with both stringed instruments supplying *sforzando* chords.

Though, generally speaking, it is well to avoid the low notes of the 'cello in *forte* passages, the deep open strings themselves, used in certain ways, will often prove most forcible. Such a bass as the following

held or repeated rhythmically; and incisive passages in which these open strings are used

produce a wealth of resonant sound which will not easily be overpowered.

In the Mozart trios where the average level of tonal strength is quite slender, and there is no desire to disturb the placid serenity of the music at any point, the student will find that such resources as these are not requisitioned. But Mozart knew as well as any of his successors how to give each instrument its due importance, and one may learn, in many simple and quite pellucid passages, how to regulate and balance the interest of the three parts without using any but the average middle notes of the violin or 'cello. There is a charming little trio in G major, the second movement of which is a set of variations upon a tiny winsome theme, beginning thus:—

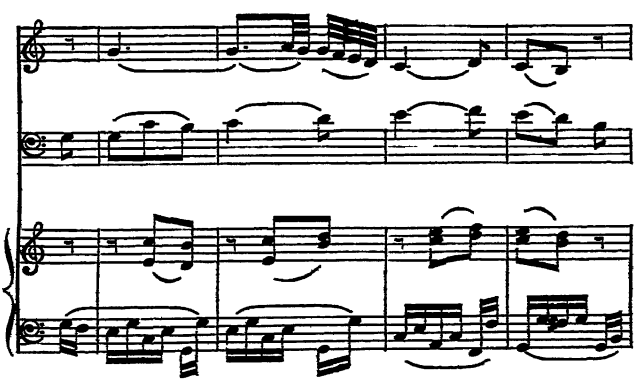
EX. 180.

This movement, being written in the old-fashioned variation form where the theme is plainly evident throughout, affords some useful instances of variety in unity. It shows us how the same thing can be said gracefully in several ways, without wasting any of the material. In the theme we see how the piano leads, neither violin nor 'cello doubling the piano part in the same octave, but making satisfactory two-part harmony by themselves. At the same time they enrich the whole design. In the first variation the violin takes up the theme:—

EX. 181.



The strings are again self-sufficient; the 'cello has an independent outline of its own, whilst the piano has a new flowing part (in semiquavers) suited to its genius.

In the second variation it is the turn of the 'cello to claim chief place, the violin having a graceful but subordinate phrase which quickly hides itself below the principal theme, and the piano giving out a semiquaver version of the bass part with pretty broken phrases of the melody in the right hand.

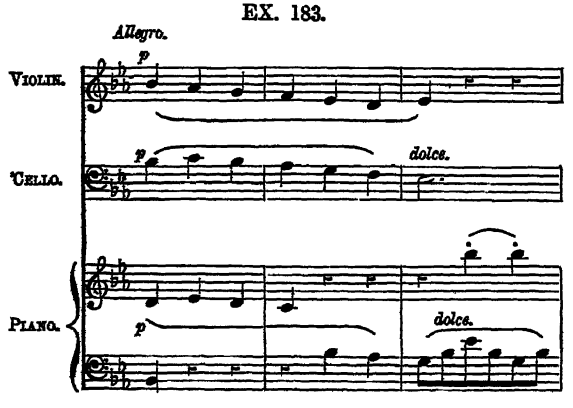
EX. 182.

The whole scheme here shown is so extremely rudimentary that this grave recital of its merits may raise a smile. But in its very simplicity and obviousness lies its chief value as an illustration—there is nothing to cover up the design, not a

single note could be omitted without destroying the balance, not a single note could be added that would not make itself prominent as an intrusion.

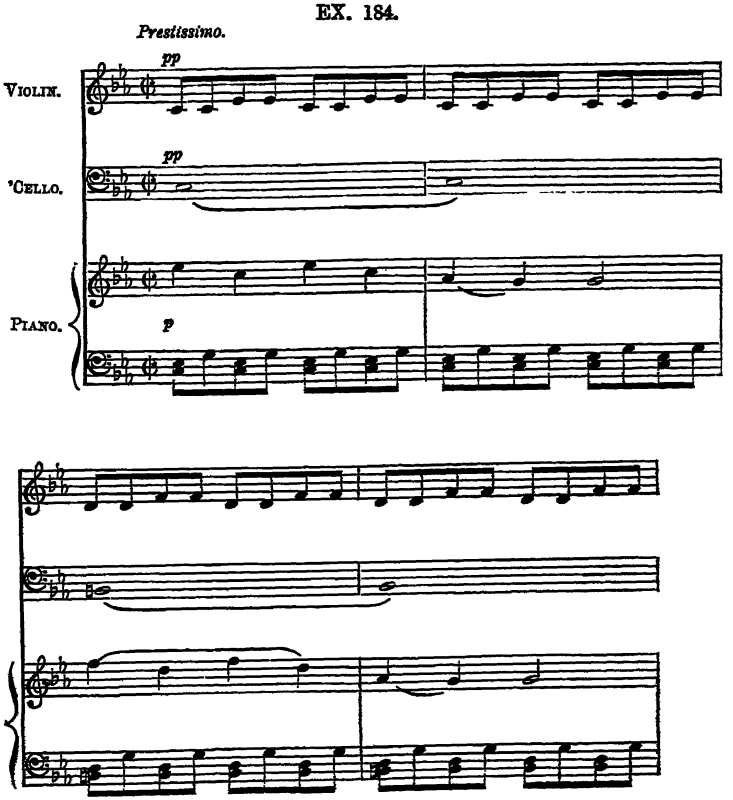
The same necessity for clear definition exists to-day, but an example by a modern composer would scarcely have driven the point home with equally convincing insistence.

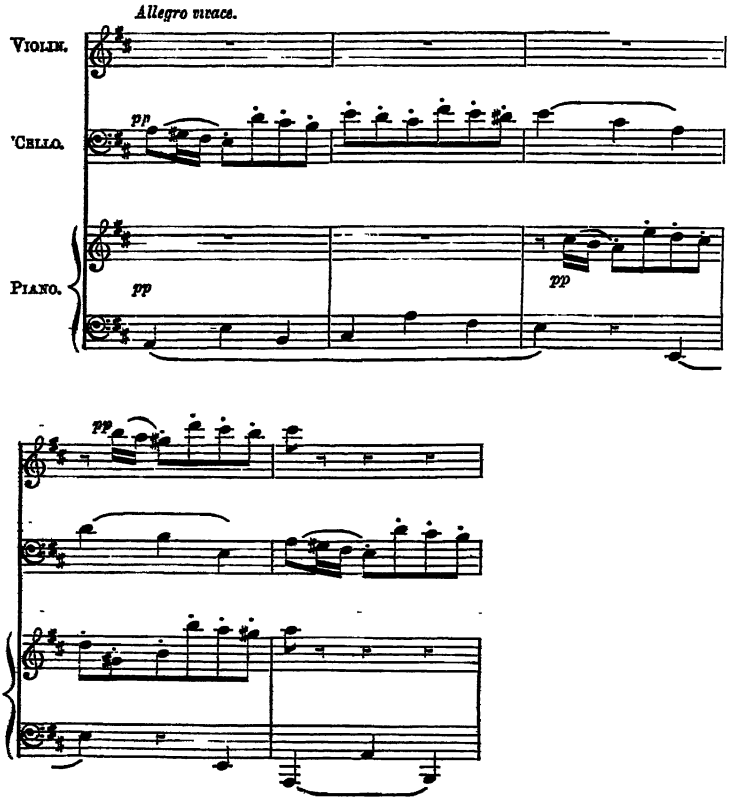
In the trios of Beethoven we find all the developments that might be expected, and a steady adherence to the elementary principles of lucid statement without redundant material is still a marked feature.

In the three very early works (known as Op. 1) there are few attempts to devise new modes of combining the instruments. The third of the group, in C minor, is the most enterprising, and from a purely musical standpoint it is a very decided advance on any trios previously composed. Beethoven is here as careful as Mozart to achieve completeness in his string-writing, and very often uses the piano to play the outside parts while the two stringed instruments supply separate subordinate lines of melody in the middle. When he employs the piano, as he rarely does here, to add an extra part in single notes to the smooth phrases of the other instruments, he does not forget that the tone-colour is totally different. As an instance, the little phrase which leads to the second subject in the opening Allegro is distributed thus:—

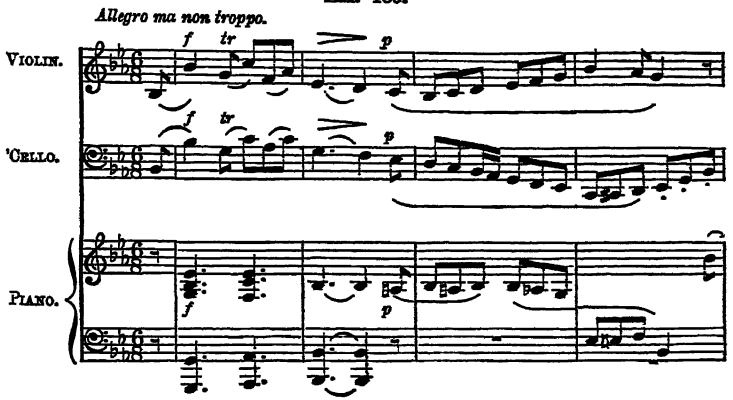
EX. 183.

The student may be warned that to give the two upper parts to the strings (in fourths) and the lowest to the piano, in such a passage, would be extremely ignorant workmanship, which no composer of judgment would dream of tolerating.

In the last movement of this fine little work there are many interesting things to observe, and attention may be called to the rhythmic opening, with its strong chords for the strings and brilliant piano arpeggios, and to the manner in which the second half of the main theme is given by the piano, accompanied by rapid *pianissimo* repetitions for the violin (which have too much character to sound like mere accompaniment) and soft sustained bass-notes for the 'cello.

EX. 184.

The two trios, Op. 70, are perhaps the best models of all, especially with regard to contrapuntal writing, which is now given more prominence than heretofore.

EX. 185.

In the above quotation from the first of these trios (in D major) we find actual four-part writing which might almost be part of a string quartet, but it is contrived with such skill that the two string parts together, and the piano part by itself, are separable portions of the design. No less instructive is the arrangement adopted in the theme of the Allegro in the Trio in E flat (No. 2 of the same opus) which is quoted by Sir

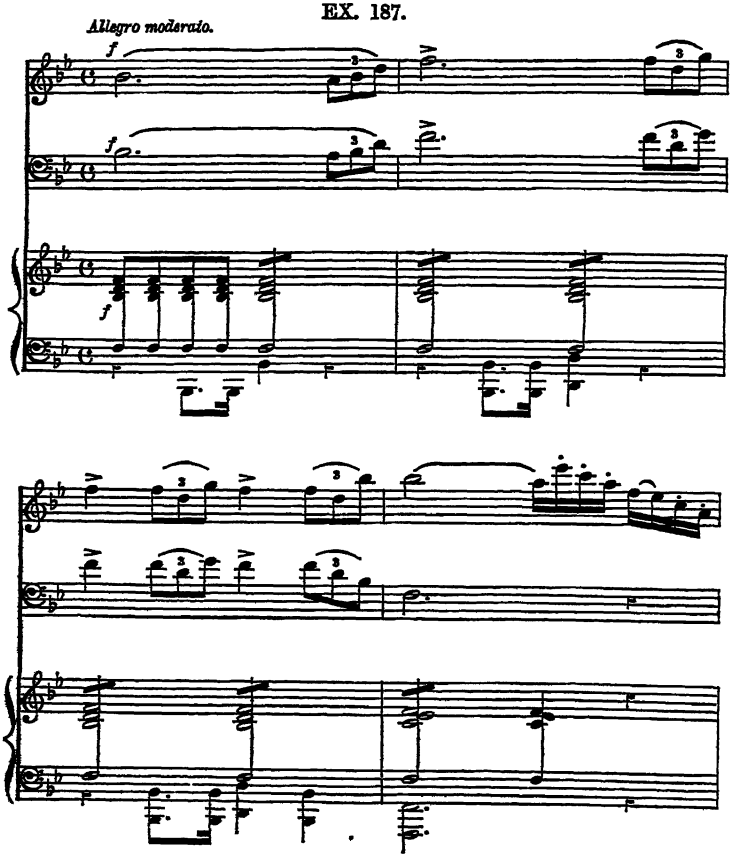
Charles Stanford in his *Musical Composition* as a model piece of trio-construction, and will bear quoting again.

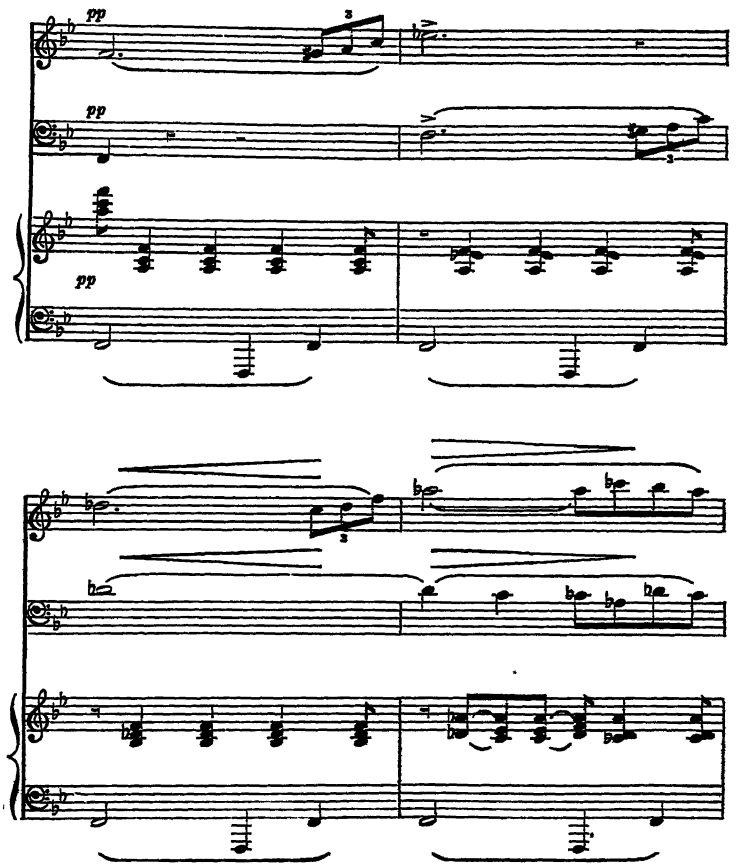
EX. 186.

Here it will be seen that the piano contributes at first supporting chords, and afterwards a middle voice, but the string parts have again a separate existence throughout, and do not depend upon these additions for their intelligent exposition and appeal.

Beethoven's famous Trio in B flat, Op. 97, is such a stupendously great composition that one might devote a separate chapter to a review of its beauties were it the function of this volume to deal with Chamber Music entirely from an æsthetic point of view. The first movement is spacious and most dignified, reminding one in mood of the opening Allegro in the F major Rasoumowsky Quartet; the Scherzo is a remarkable specimen of Beethoven's concentration and decision; and the Andante is a king among slow movements, having a solemn theme which must ever rank with the finest inspirations in music. In his treatment of the instruments (except perhaps in the Scherzo) Beethoven indulges in greater fulness and sonority than before. The piano seldom plays in thin single lines, but has large handfuls of chords and warm arpeggio figures, and, in order to preserve the balance, the strings are frequently allotted prolonged passages of double notes. It is

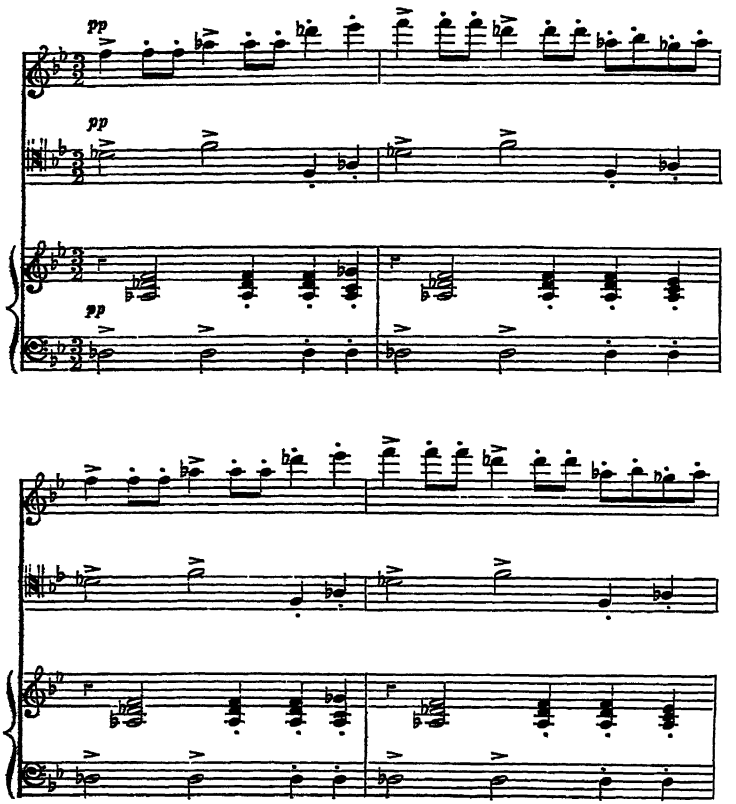
almost inevitable that this gain in force and strength should be achieved at the expense of some loss of that intimate conversational charm which is so valuable a characteristic in Chamber Music. And thus it is that the Trio in B flat, having ideas large enough for a Symphony with only three instruments to interpret them, seems sometimes to burst out of its frame.

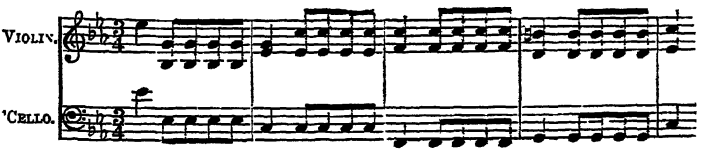
The two trios of Schubert suffer to a certain extent in the same way. The first, in B flat, is, however, well worthy of study, and has some original and delightful features. The bold and vigorous initial subject is splendidly effective:—

EX. 187.

Interesting developments follow, many of which are in the true trio style, and clearly defined.

EX. 188.

The slow movement, too, is beautiful, and one may note that the 'cello plays in its higher register throughout most of this section—a very uncommon feature in the trios of Schubert's time. The Finale, after the somewhat Mozartian flavour of its opening, has some episodes irresistibly characteristic of Schubert, including a section in D flat in which a persistent

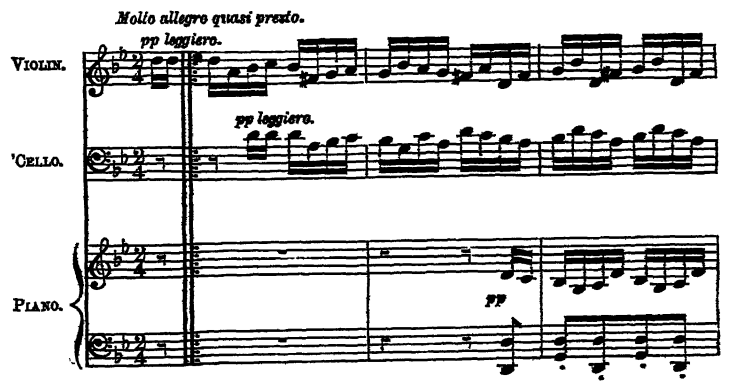
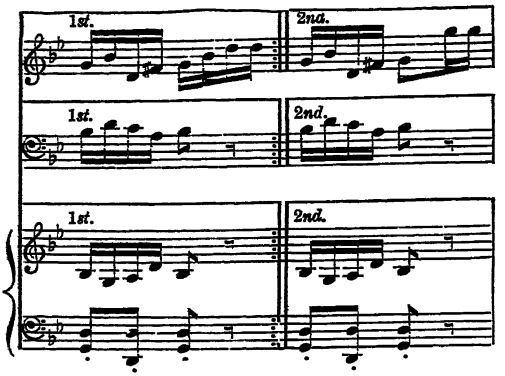
and somewhat trumpet-like theme is set forth with much point and resource. It is like a gay procession in the distance, and affords an excellent example of *suggestion* in Chamber Music which never trespasses upon the preserves of realism.

EX. 189.

The second Trio, in E flat, has some noteworthy qualities and one fine movement—a Scherzo in which the piano and strings play in Canon. But the other movements are overcrowded with accompaniments for the violin and 'cello in chords, such as this:—

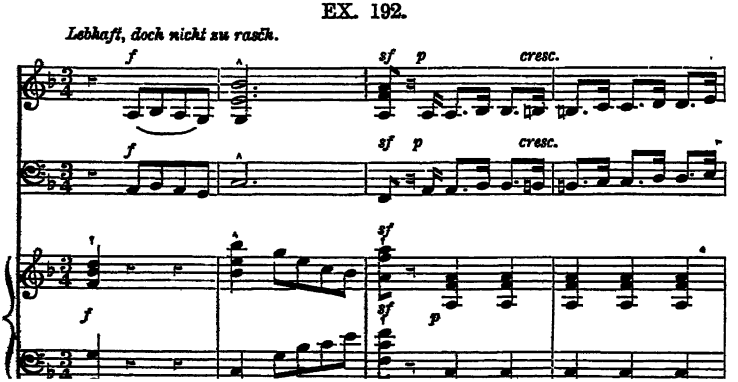
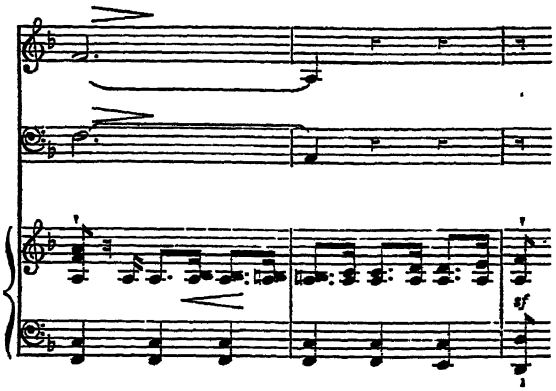
EX. 190.

which are poor devices at best; and the Finale has subject-matter too much akin to the Lancers to make a very sincere impression nowadays.

It may now be more profitable to consider the work of some later composers, whose treatment of the same combination differs considerably from that adopted by Beethoven and Schubert, and will, perhaps, afford examples more applicable to the student's present-day needs.

The two trios of Mendelssohn, in D minor and C minor, after enjoying enormous popularity for many years, are now very seldom heard. The subject-matter in them is mostly of a smooth and pleasant, if somewhat sentimental, character; the piano part is brilliant and facile, and the string writing easily effective without attempting anything in the least adventurous. As in other chamber works by the same composer, the Scherzos are the movements which afford the most striking and instructive features. That of the Trio in C minor (Op. 66) is a particularly admirable instance of dainty and well-balanced writing.

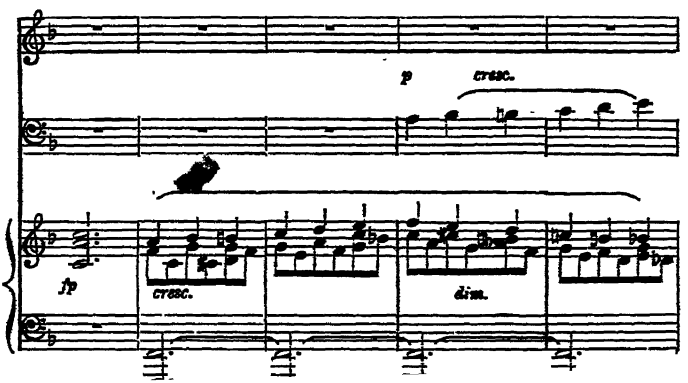
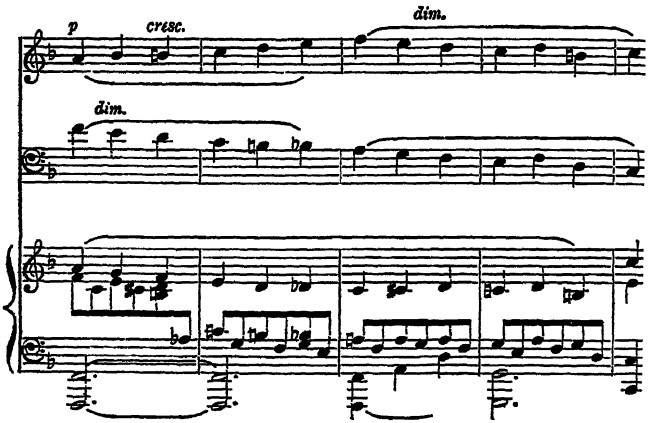
EX. 191.

The *saltato*, or light and gently-rebounding, bowing has here a most delicate effect, and the promise of the opening is well fulfilled, the piano assisting, but never intrusively, though its presence is always appreciably felt.

For romance and warmth of colour there is more to commend in the trios of Schumann. Of these the best-known, and perhaps the most highly meritorious, is that in D minor, Op. 63. As music it is finer than as an example of trio-writing. Much of the work suffers from the fact that the piano too constantly doubles the string parts. The outlines go too much together instead of in contrary ways, and the violin and 'cello frequently merely reinforce the top and bottom notes of the piano part. There is, however, a good deal of independence in the Scherzo which has a splendid main idea.

EX. 192.

Nothing could be better than the vigorous disposition of the instruments here shown, or the way in which the strings and piano, depending upon each other, are dovetailed and share the interest with absolute equality of importance.

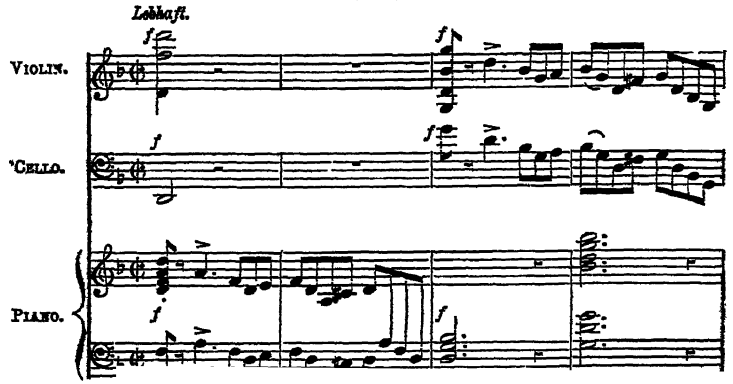
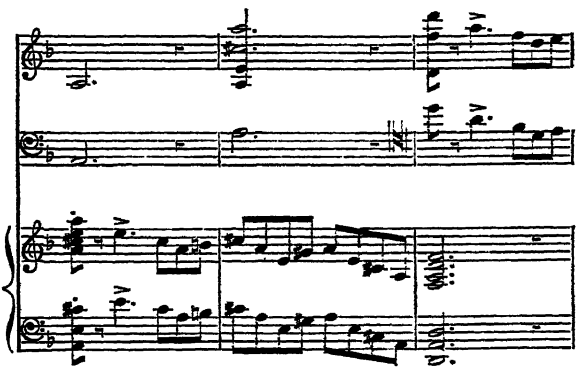
The middle section of the movement is in decided contrast, but, with its smooth risings and fallings and exceedingly homogeneous design, it is fully as effective.

EX. 193.



Besides three trios in the ordinary form, Schumann wrote a set of Fantasiestücke (Op. 88) for the same combination of instruments, which exhibits similar merits, and similar minor defects.

The following brief extract from the "Humoreske," which forms one of the movements, illustrates at once the charm and the danger of constantly making the strings and piano exchange phrases having exactly the same melodic curvature and rhythmic force:—

EX. 194.

If the phrases in themselves were as well fitted for the strings as they are for the piano, this would be a perfect specimen of trio-writing. As it is, one is often led to feel that with a little alteration large portions of these works would sound better if performed upon two pianos. As has been noted in the case of his string-quartets, Schumann too often thought in terms of the piano when writing for other instruments, and this defect sometimes creates a feeling of awkwardness and angularity in performance, the string-players seeming to be struggling to attain what is not quite within their province.

Most of the composers who followed Schumann, however, have been less successful than he was in devising suitable methods of distributing the parts.

The fact that the tuning of the 'cello is a twelfth lower than that of the violin (that they form, so to speak, the top and bottom of things) has led, in most modern trios, to a certain feeling that the combination is an imperfect one. Sometimes the composer seems to be making the best of a poor opportunity by disguising the difficulties that he has to face; more often still (as in the case of Tschaïkowsky) he struggles for expansion and writes what may be regarded as an imitation of a work on a larger scale, treating the single violin and 'cello much in the same way that he would a mass of strings in an orchestral piece.

The one outstanding composer of trios in recent times is Brahms, in whose three monumental examples we are able to

realise how perfectly the combination of violin and 'cello with a modern pianoforte can be ordered and controlled. These works, which have rightly served as models for more than a generation of composers, are influenced to some extent by the traditions and ideals of both classic and romantic writers, but Brahms, while standing in clear relationship to each of these schools of thought, had a personality which existed apart from either, and its powerful impress is asserted in many passages, both forcible and tender, and in a certain aloofness (irritating to some) which has been characterised as "uncompromising."

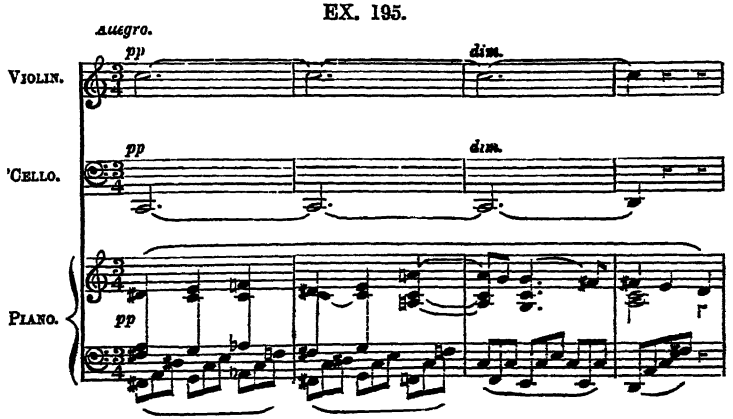
Few glimpses of this latter attitude are, however, to be found in the early Trio in B (Op. 8), in which traces of outside influences are continuously observable—there is more than one suggestion of Mendelssohn and Schumann, and the Scherzo, in pattern, somewhat recalls the second movement of the great Beethoven Trio in B flat.

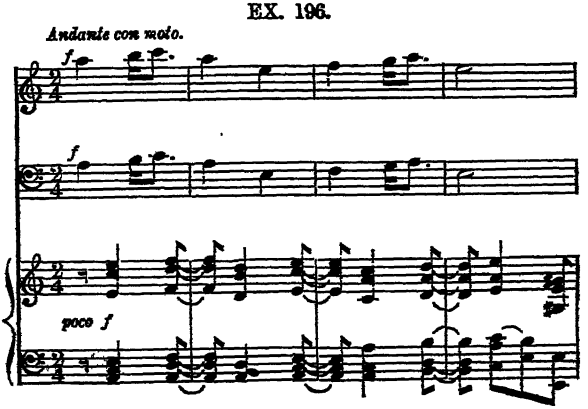
It is worthy of note that many years after its composition Brahms completely revised this work, and it was reissued by Simrock. This is the edition generally used for performance nowadays. A comparison between the two versions reveals a considerable number of changes, and will be of interest to the student, who can now purchase the work, as originally planned, very cheaply in Augener's edition.

Brahms's real personal maturity of grasp is to be seen, however, in the second Trio, in C major (Op. 87), and attains its highest manifestation in the third Trio, in C minor (Op. 101). In these works we find not only noble themes and a musical conciseness scarcely hinted at in his Op. 8, but a distribution of the instrumental forces so apt and decisive that all suggestion of inequality and unjust balance seems to melt away, and one feels that the imperfections so troublesome to others have proved, in his case, actual aids to inspiration. Just as Chopin, in the writing of piano solo music, seems to turn the very defects of the instrument to good account, so Brahms, in these two trios, seizes upon the embarrassing points of the combination and makes some of his most characteristic effects by their help.

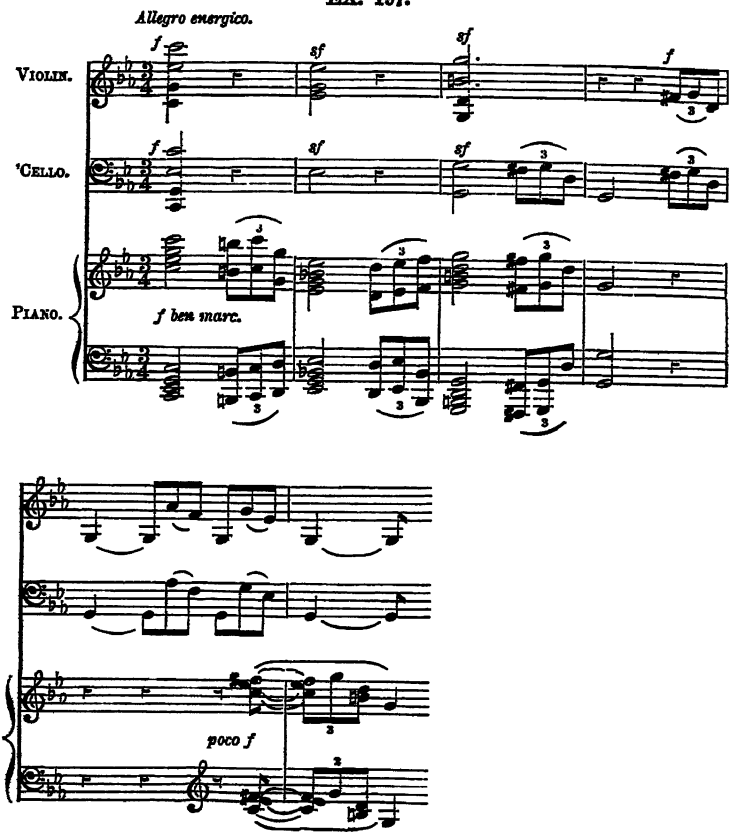
In the Trio, Op. 87, there are several striking passages

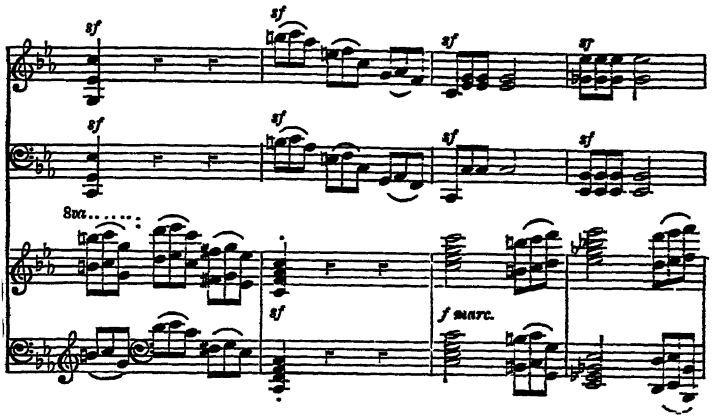
which owe their entire conception to the circumstance that the violin and 'cello are far apart in pitch. In the following bars from the first movement, the two strings sustain 'pedal-notes' above and below, and the piano has the chief matter in between :—

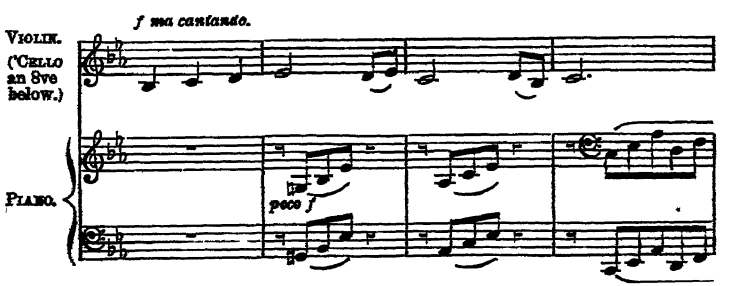
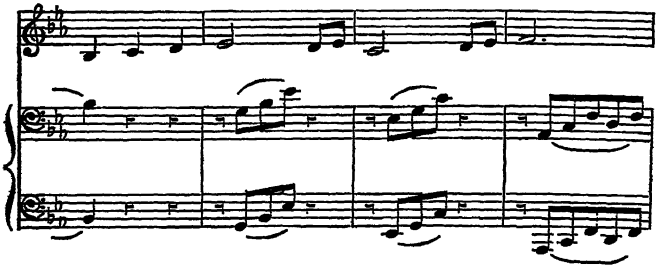
EX. 195.

In the Andante of the same work the strings are made to play the chief melody two octaves apart for a considerable space. This was not, of course, an entirely new idea, but it is doubtful if any melody has ever so inevitably fitted itself to such colouring, or found so striking and sincere an expression by this means.

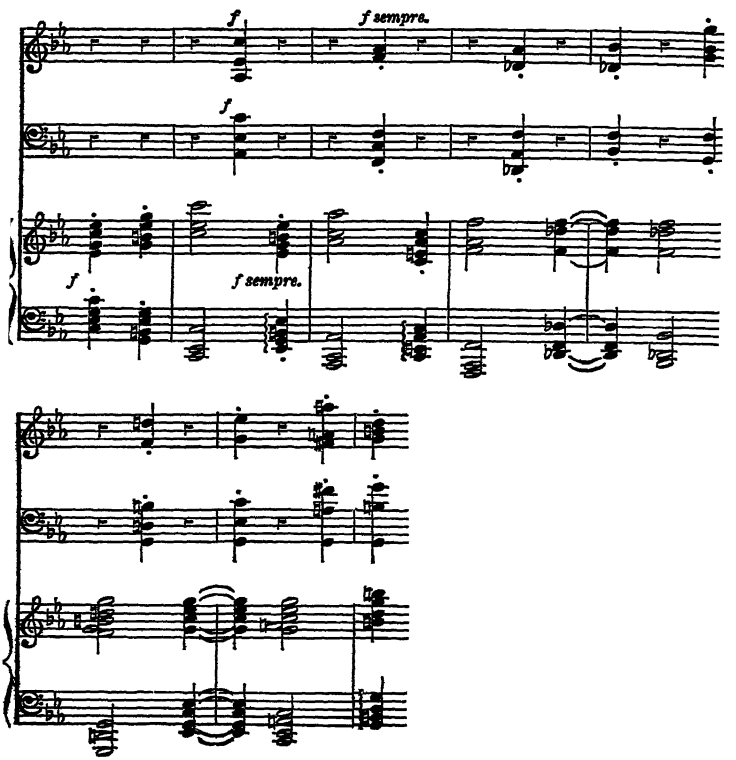
EX. 196.

The magnificent Op. 101 yields so much that is profitable and stimulating to study that no apology will be needed for quoting somewhat extensively from its many distinctive pages.

The fine rugged vigour of the opening is surely unsurpassed in the whole literature of trio music:—

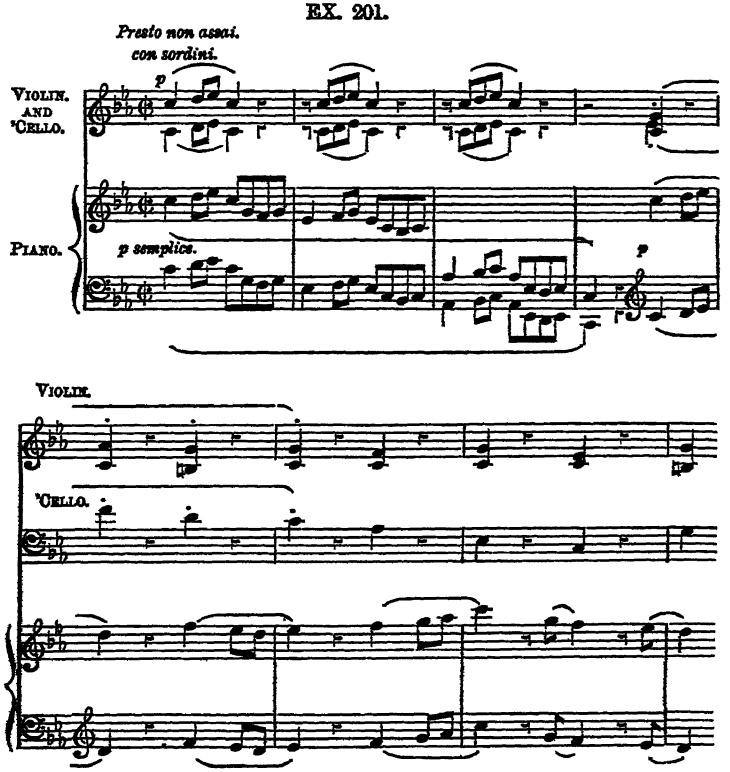
EX. 197.

This eloquent utterance leads to developments which disclose some new methods of trio-writing, and accentuate and even increase the splendid qualities which the rhythmic shape of the subject reveals.

EX. 198.

Still *forte*, but with a kind of deep and strong tenderness in place of the fierce passion of the opening, we reach the second subject, in which the stringed instruments play the melody together in octaves, each in a rich and warm part of its register. Simple breadth of treatment is likewise a characteristic of the piano part. The whole passage is, technically, a piece of two-part writing; nevertheless the firm and deliberate shapes of the accompanying phrases form a quite definite chordal basis, and the harmonic effect is remarkably sonorous.

EX. 199.

The use, in a trio, of huge chords for piano and string nswering one another, and the value of syncopated rhythms ave never been better exemplified than in a fine passag owards the end of this movement.

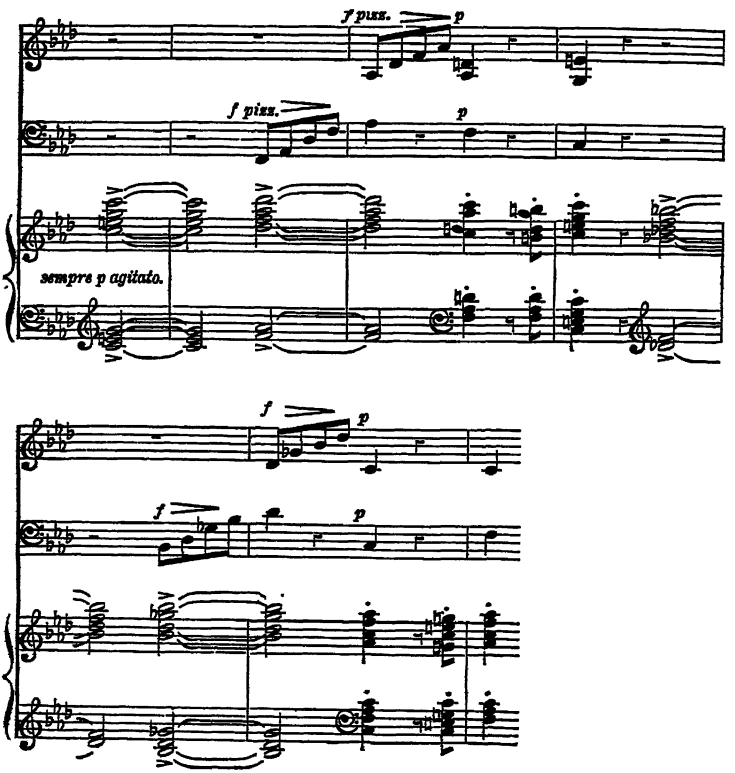
EX. 200.

Here is music in which the grip is tremendous, and the whole result massive and powerful, yet never for one moment does it sound orchestral in character. The peculiar effect of the thick chords in the piano, often wide apart with frequent thirds low down in the bass, should be noted; but the student may be warned against actually imitating a feature so essentially Brahmsian that it is almost a mannerism.

The second movement, a Presto non assai, is as fragile and delicate as the first is stormy and forcible. The strings at the outset are muted, and though (quite unusually) the key is the same, the mood is so contrasted that no monotony is felt.

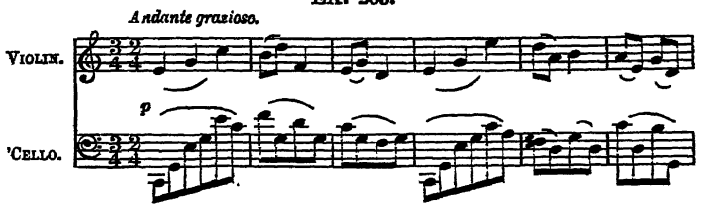
EX. 201.

It is like some veiled figure gliding mysteriously before us. There is almost an unearthly beauty in the outline of the

shadowy, drooping, opening phrase on the piano, with the violin and 'cello playing fading echoes of its first four notes. The device of soft accompanying chords on the strings has never been better employed than it is in the immediately ensuing bars, against the gently throbbing undulations of the pianist's melody.

Later in the movement there is an excellent example of quick *pizzicato* notes, *forte*, passing in a continuous arpeggio from one instrument to the other—very difficult to play, but quite fascinatingly beautiful when properly accomplished. It should be noticed that the piano, to preserve the balance, plays *softly* against them.

EX. 202.

In the Andante Grazioso which follows, the strings are used alternately with the piano, and the time is unusual, a bar of $\frac{3}{4}$ being followed by two bars of $\frac{2}{4}$. The opening may be quoted to show how skilfully the two stringed instruments may be made completely self-satisfactory when the piano is silent.

EX. 203.

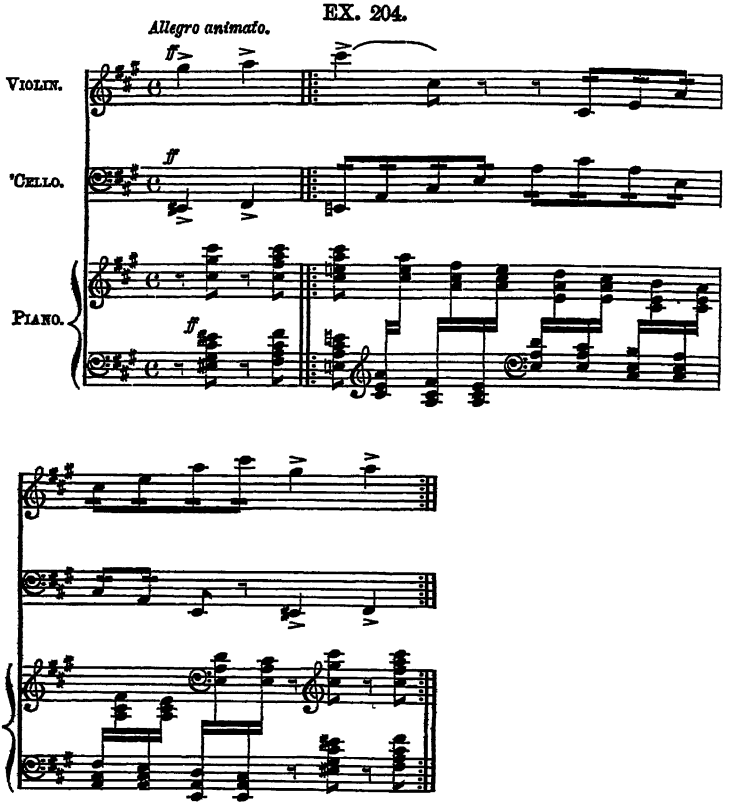


The immediate repetition of these six bars by the piano alone is enriched with fuller harmony, the right hand having, in addition to the melody, chords on the weak quavers of the bar. The conversational treatment is continued throughout most of the movement: sometimes the questions and answers come quicker one after another, sometimes the phrases overlap, but strings and piano have quite independent life almost all the time.

The last movement is as fine and original as the rest, but enough has been cited to show some of the best ways of adapting a difficult combination to modern needs.

If, by way of warning, it may again be permissible to submit to the reader samples of unsuitable modes of writing, there is an irresistible temptation to quote from Tschaïkowsky's Trio in A minor, Op. 50 ("To the memory of a great artist"), a work which, while musically intense and sensitive, altogether lacks restraint, and continually oversteps the recognised boundaries of Chamber Music. To do Tschaïkowsky justice it must be said that he was himself fully conscious of the deficiencies which mar his work. In writing to a friend immediately after its completion, he says: "I am afraid, having written all my life for the orchestra and only taken late in life to Chamber Music, I may have failed to adapt the instrumental combination to my musical thoughts. In short, I fear I may have arranged

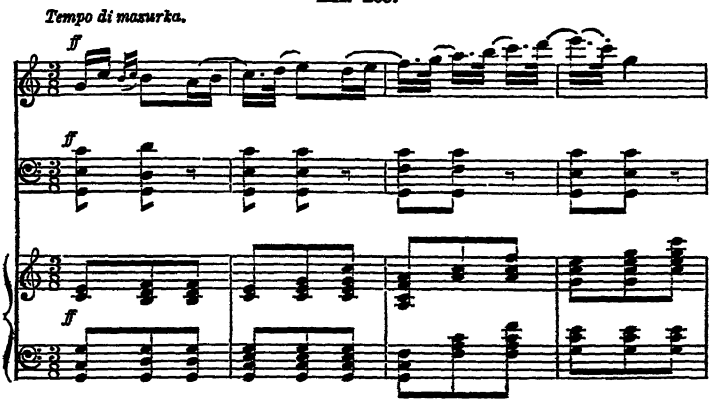
music of a symphonic character as a trio, instead of writing directly for my instruments."[1] If we inspect the work we see that it is in the climaxes, and in the passages which lead up to them, that the chief errors of judgment and taste are committed. When we reach one of the most frenzied portions of the first movement, as an instance, we find that the following distribution of parts is quite inadequate to express the emotion of the moment.

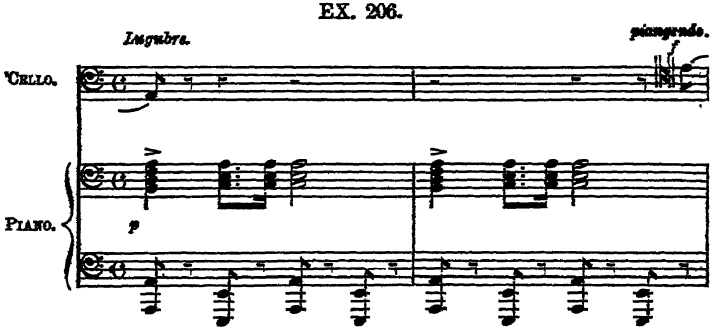
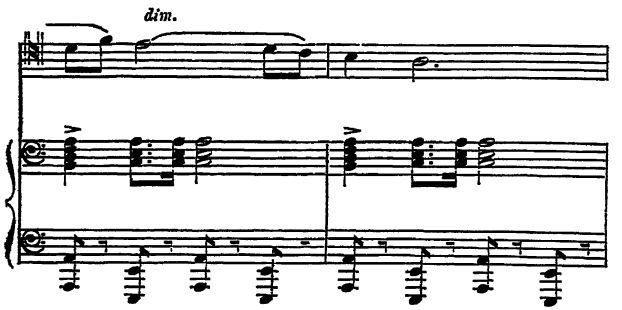
EX. 204.

This flagrant piece of make-believe obviously fails to justify its existence. The piano is playing a concerto, and the two strings are feebly endeavouring to imitate the colouring of an

[1] *The Life and Letters of Peter Ilich Tschaikowsky*, edited by Rosa Newmarch.

orchestral 'tutti.' A good idea is thrown away, and the artistic value of the composition is soiled and shattered.

More effective, but no less ill-judged, is the attempt to obtain a violent contrast in the Mazurka variation of the second movement, when the key suddenly changes to C major, and the whole sham orchestral battery is again brought into play, reminding one of a child's game of soldiers.

EX. 205.

Nor is it only in the strenuous passages that the symphonic tendency is evident. Many of the more restrained episodes, including the final Coda to the last movement (fine and impressive as it is as music), suggest the orchestra in their large elemental outlines, and in their insistence on the continuous reiteration of the same harmonies.

EX. 206.

The circumstance that this trio is full of fine ideas only serves to throw the inadequacy of their expression into stronger relief. There are many who prefer it to the Brahms trios, but it is safe to say that not one of those many really understands, or cares for, the finer shades of Chamber Music. There may be lovers of orchestral sound who derive greater satisfaction from a trio which suggests larger things, however slightly, than from a work which frankly accepts the qualities and quantities by which its actual interpretation is bounded—just as they may prefer piano-duet arrangements of symphonies to solo sonatas. But this implies imagination in excess of artistic insight. Such a work as the Tschaïkowsky trio could no more be listened to as it was meant to be by a man who had never heard an orchestra than it could be composed by such a man.

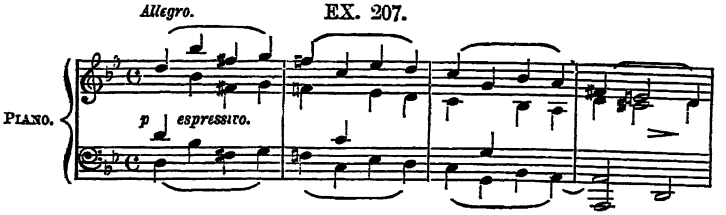
If we add a viola part to the ordinary trio combination (making a string-trio with piano), or an extra violin as well as a viola (making a string-quartet with piano), our task at once becomes an easier one to cope with, and the dangers that beset us are lessened. It might be thought that a composer by increasing his instrumental forces would render himself more liable to fall into a symphonic style. The fact is that the more easily sufficient unto itself the combination he chooses may be made, the less alluring the temptation becomes to ape other things. Moreover, should he, in some measure, succumb, the positive mischief wrought by his defections will be neither as great nor as distressingly evident.

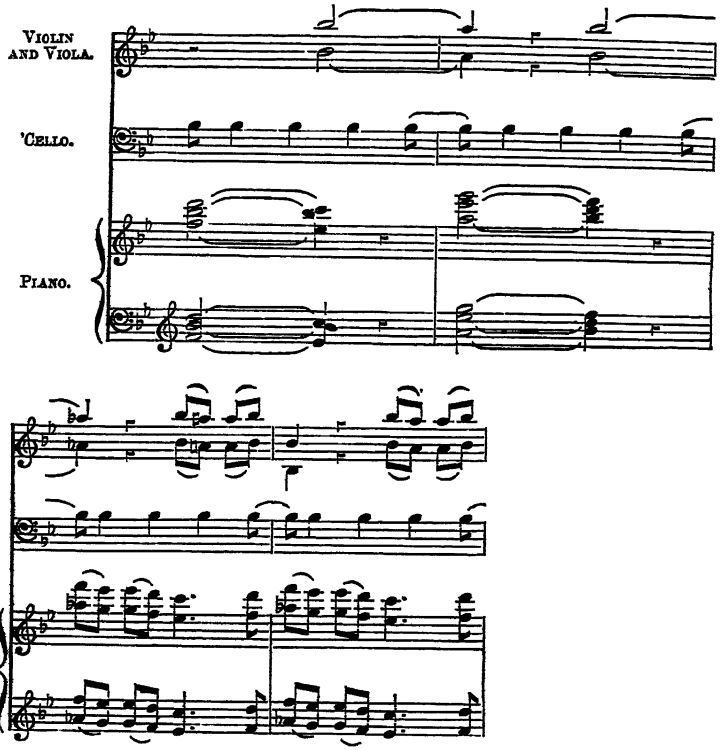
There will now be no difficulty in making the string-writing complete in itself, and it will be more frequently possible to give the piano a rest, and release it from its former obligation of continually filling up the bare spaces of an incomplete harmonic scaffolding. This in itself will afford many new opportunities for diversity. The gap between the violin and 'cello (playing in their normal registers), which was one of the chief sources of trouble in trio-writing, will be no longer existent, and the general strengthening of the string tone will decidedly make for a more evenly-matched adjustment of the ensemble.

Setting aside a few not very important examples by Mozart, and some entirely negligible early works by Beethoven and Mendelssohn, we find the pianoforte quartet combination practically unexploited by great composers until the time of Schumann. As for the pianoforte quintet this may be said to be absolutely the invention of Schumann, whose one and only example remains to this day amongst the three or four greatest in existence. Almost all the works of this class worthy of study are therefore fairly advanced in style, and employ the modern piano used in modern pianistic fashion.

Schumann's piano quartet (in E flat, Op. 47) has in three of its movements a fine romantic spirit and impetus, but suffers to some extent from the faults observed in his trios and sonatas for violin and piano: there is often too little independent enterprise in the string parts, and the piano is rather constantly utilised merely to reinforce them. The slow movement boasts a sentimental subject, which 'cellists generally render rather more aggressively sentimental than necessary, and the piano part is here very largely mere accompaniment. More diversity of treatment is to be found in the piano quartets of Brahms, which, like the trios, are supremely good models. If we glance at the opening of the Quartet in G minor, Op. 25, we shall see at once how the combination employed has influenced the composer in his choice of a subject.

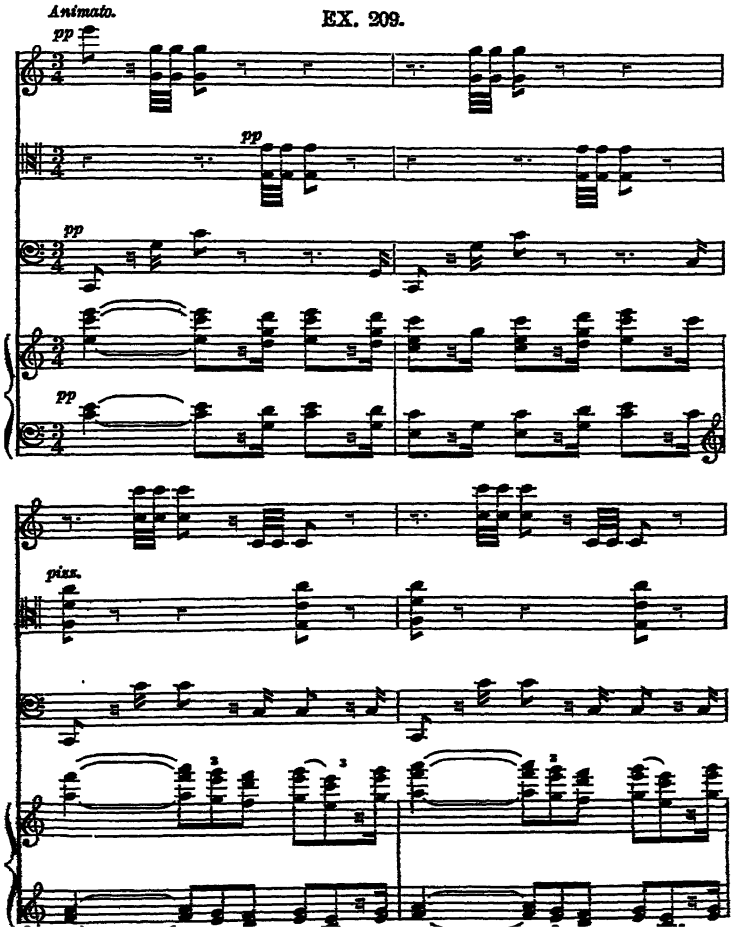
This is a theme which is equally well suited to strings or piano, and is also capable of being split up into sections and phrases.

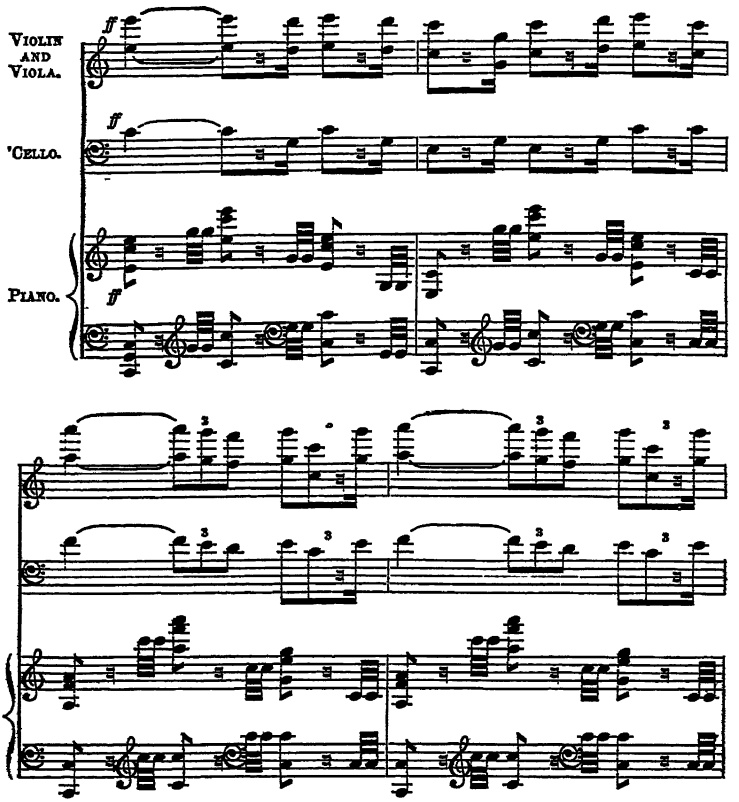
EX. 207.

It is soon evident that this is one of the composer's intentions. The first episode, however, has different matter and a different manner:—

EX. 208.

The music is here devised on the effective 'three-part' basis of which much has been said in earlier chapters; the piano and two upper strings converse one with another whilst the 'cello holds the whole together with its continuous syncopated pedal-note

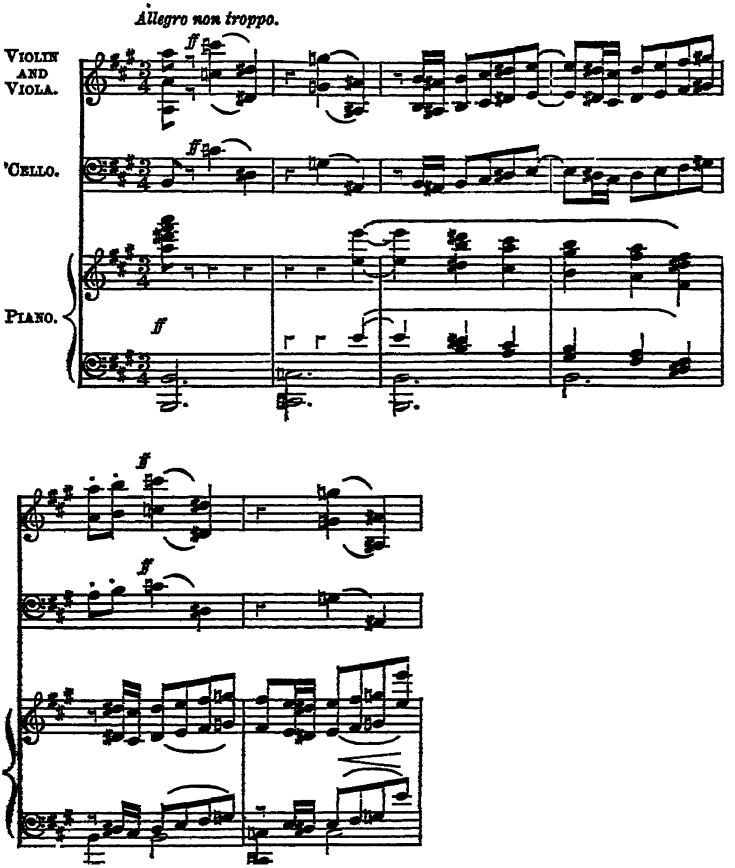
In the succeeding Intermezzo the strings are used very much as a string-trio independent of the piano, and the device of moving the parts in sixths (as shown on the preceding page) is once more much resorted to, both on the piano and strings. It is a charmingly romantic movement, with an extra touch of animation in the middle section.

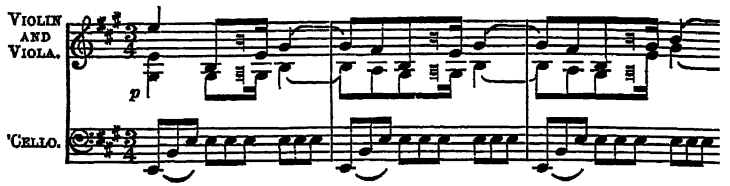
In the slow movement there is an *animato* section with a rhythmical division of the parts of much interest to the listener :—

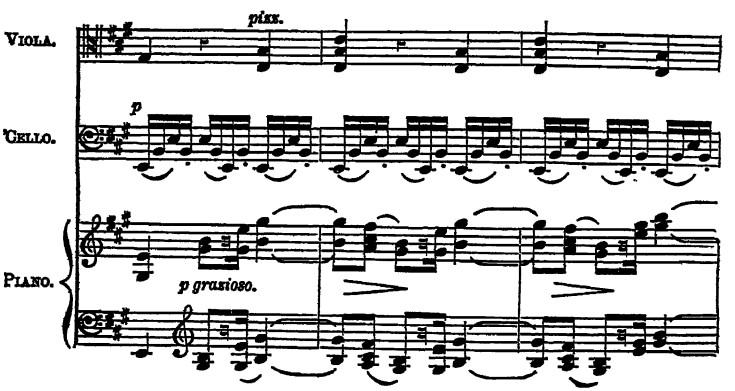
EX. 209.

This, continuing in similar strain for some time, rises to a climax, when the position of strings and piano are exchanged. Both arrangements are equally felicitous, thanks to the wise choice of theme and figuration.

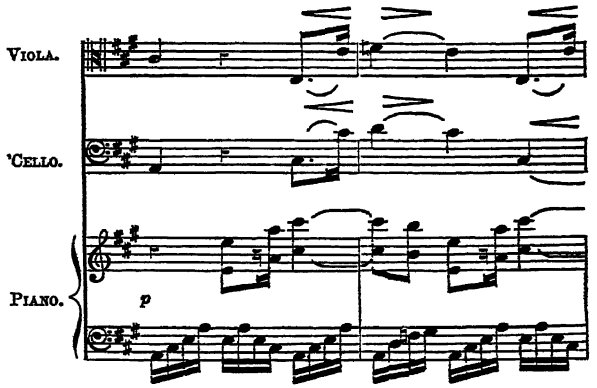
EX. 210.

The subject of the Finale, a Rondo alla Zingarese, gives an example of a very unusual method of procedure in Brahms—the absolute doubling of the strings and piano in the same octave. This continues for a considerable number of bars. The subject is so rhythmic, so definite and direct, that the intention of the composer (as in some similar cases by Schumann) is evidently to combine all forces to present it.

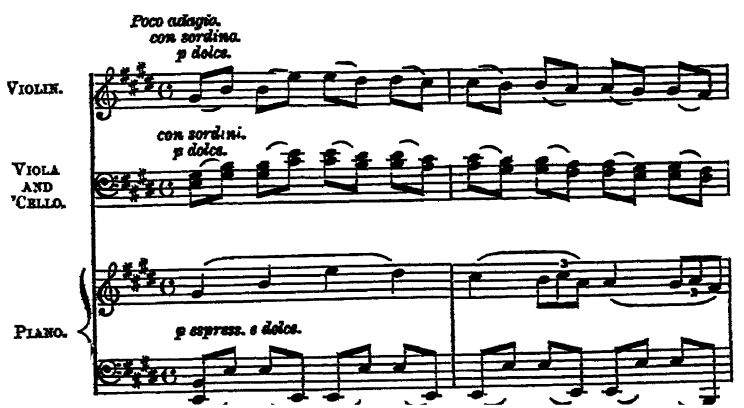
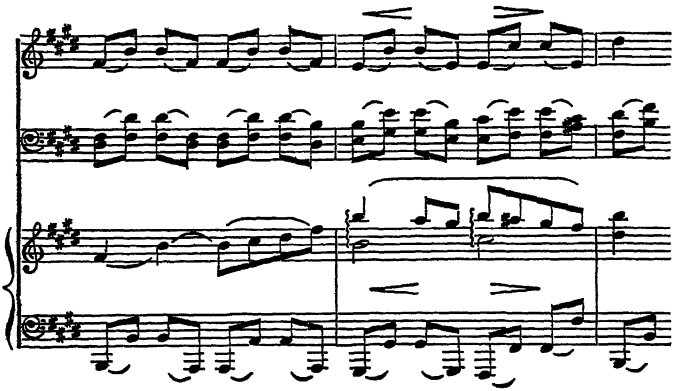
Of the other two pianoforte quartets by Brahms, that in A major is the most striking and inspiriting. Following closely upon the heels of the work in G minor, for it bears the Opus number 26, it exhibits perhaps more resource and more confidence than its immediate predecessor. Amongst the many interesting features of its first movement may be noted the frequent treatment of the three strings as one rhythmic body, and the skilful interchanging of figures equally suited to both violin and keyboard.

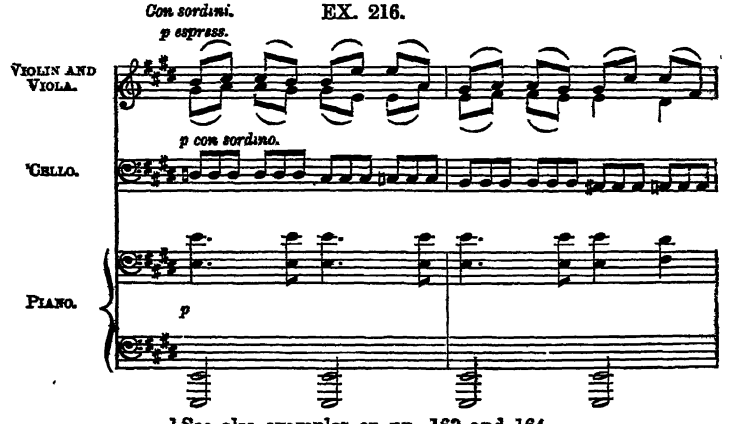
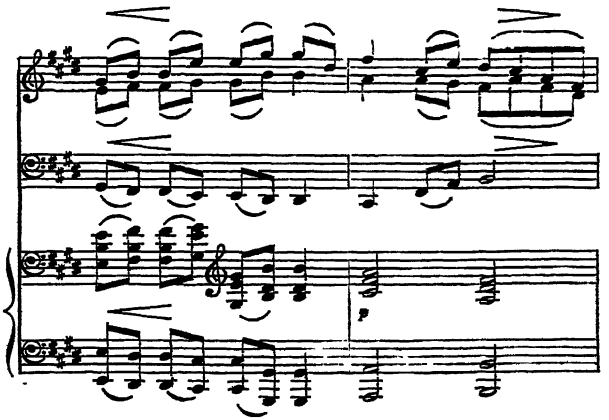
EX. 211.

It will be instructive, also, to notice the varieties of colour and movement that are brought to bear upon a little subsidiary theme which appears, at first, on the strings alone.

EX. 212.

Beginning as above shown, the two upper parts are, after eight bars, transferred to the piano, where they are doubled in the upper octave, the 'cello providing a more animated variant of its previous figuration, and the viola some *pizzicato* chords which help to mark the rhythm.

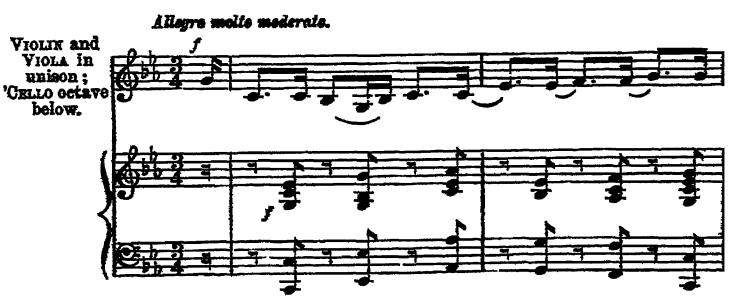
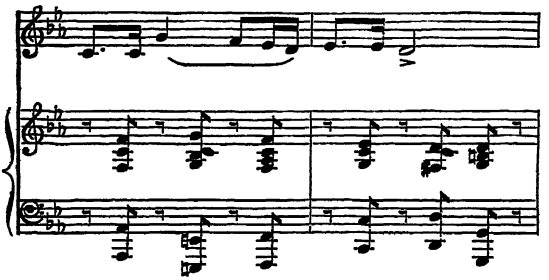
EX. 213.

Later in the movement, when the same subject returns in the key of A, yet another scheme of distribution is resorted to, the nature of which can be gathered from the two bars given below:—

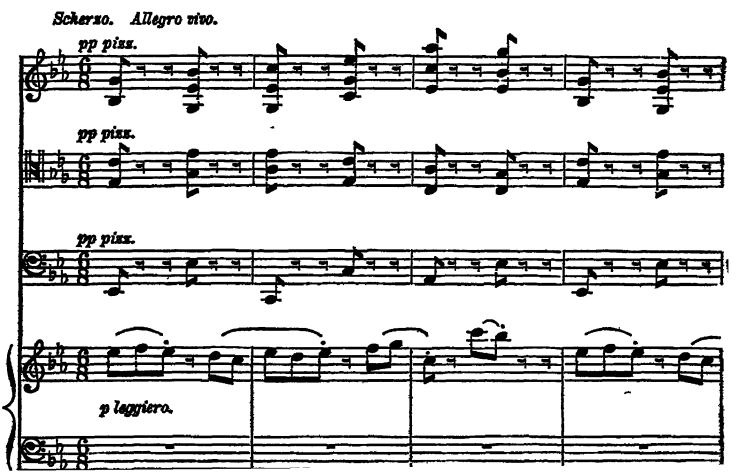
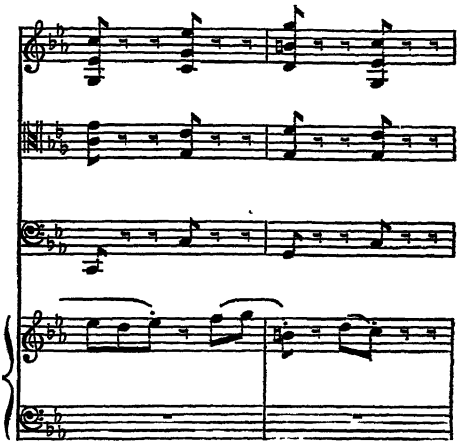
EX. 214.

The crowning beauty of this work, however, is its slow movement, which is full of poetry, and possesses a wealth of varied colouring quite remarkable in Chamber Music. The main theme is given in simple form to the piano, but the strings, to which mutes are applied, follow its outlines with a kind of caressing movement in quavers. The balance is perfect, the *cantabile* of the piano being enhanced, and a tender dreaminess imparted to the melody.

EX. 215.

Variety is effected, but the same atmosphere is secured and maintained, when, on the return of the subject, the violin and 'cello (their mutes removed) play the expressive theme in its simple form, two octaves apart. With the piano contributing the quaver figures (slurred in twos as before, and *una corda*), the design is completed. Meantime these very quaver figures have been themselves separated from the context and transferred, in Brahms's customary manner,[1] into themes of importance, so that they assume on their reappearance in association with the principal subject something more than their original significance. In the Coda they are used again for a new melody, and here the music seems more serenely beautiful than ever.

EX. 216.

[1] See also examples on pp. 163 and 164.

Simple as this is, there is a touch of magic in it. It will be difficult for those who have never heard the work to realise how exquisite the descending scale of repeated notes on the 'cello sounds, and how well the blending of string and piano tone is contrived.

One of the very finest pianoforte-quartets of modern times is that of Fauré in C minor, Op. 15, which is so alert, and withal so dignified, that it will not suffer by comparison even with the masterpieces of Brahms. The engaging rhythm of the opening subject of the first movement strikes the hearer at once. All three strings participate, and the piano, playing chords after each beat, shows up the strength of the theme.

EX. 217.

This is a clear example of a method of writing which may be certain of effect if it is not too long continued, or rendered cheap by commonplace accompaniment. In this case the whole movement is consistently on a high level of dignity and authority. The Scherzo which follows is remarkably original, and a few bars must be quoted to show something which has not been demonstrated before—the use of *pizzicato* chords (*pp*) to accompany a single-note tune on the piano. After six bars of strings alone (*pizzicato*), the following statement of the chief theme is heard:—

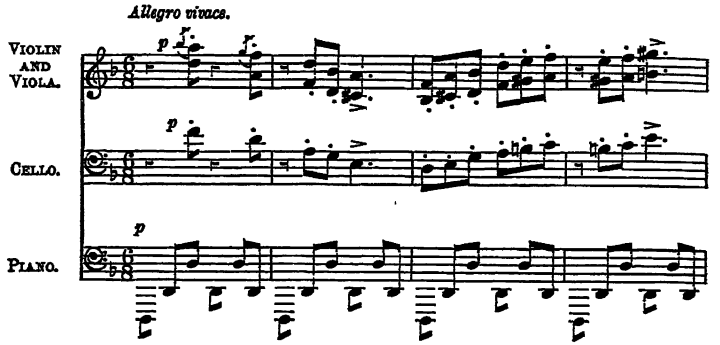
EX. 218.

Among other points noticeable in this movement one may mention the frequency with which the violin and viola play a piquant little melody (*pianissimo*) in *unison* (not octaves) with each other—an unusual colouring being the result.

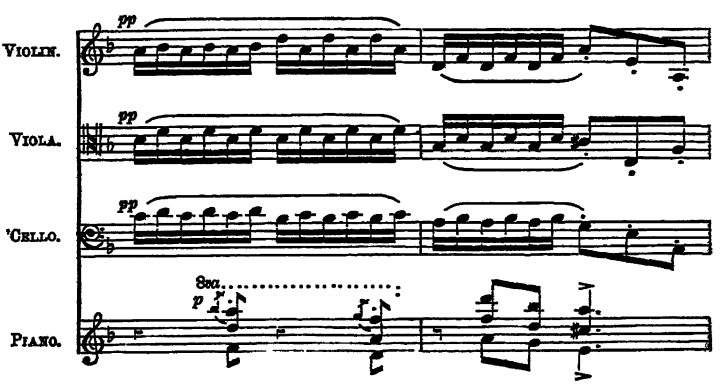
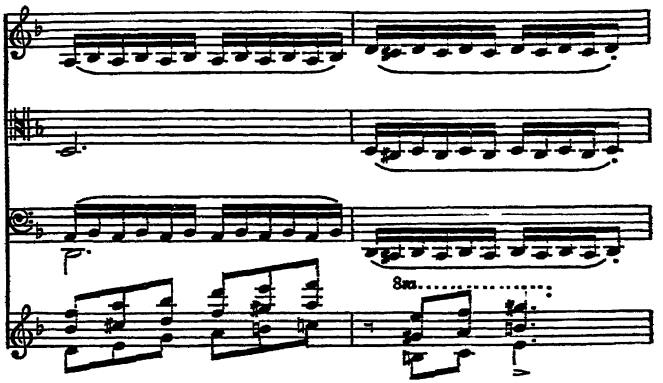
The slow movement, not very important in dimensions, has breadth and beauty; the Finale recaptures some of the rhythmical force of the opening Allegro, and boasts a very fine and memorable melody for second subject. As a whole, however, the first two movements are the most striking features of the work.

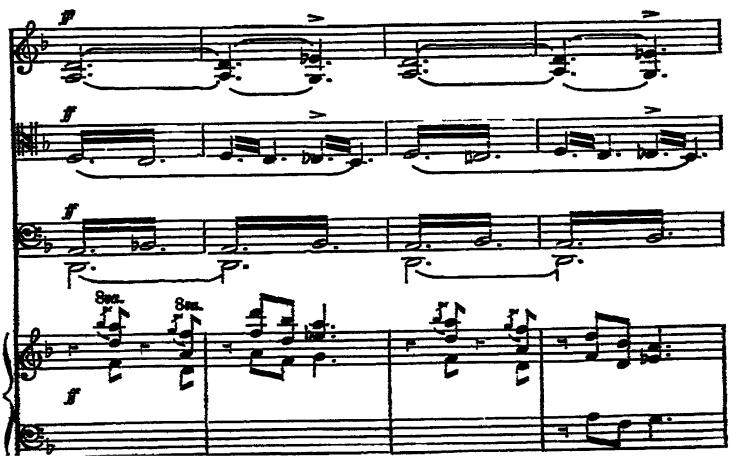
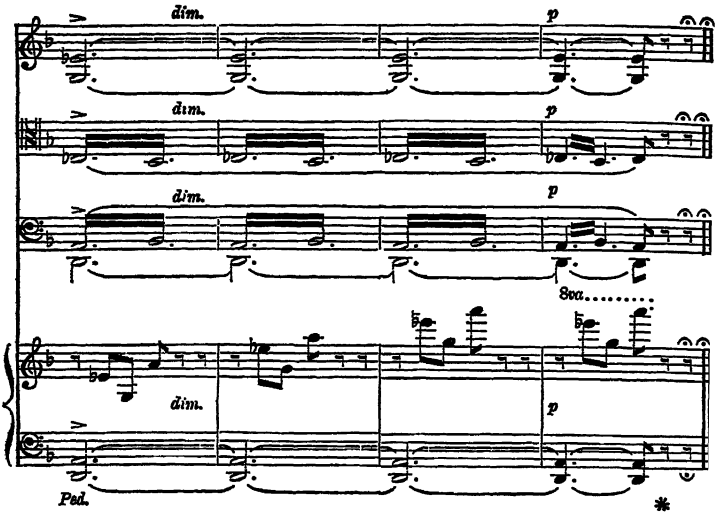
Fauré has since written another quartet, in G minor, Op. 45. It repeats some of the excellences of the previous work, and is distinguished by similarly attractive subject-matter. In the Scherzo he makes a further experiment with the idea of *pizzicato* chords, but it is not so delicately contrived nor so happily inspired.

Before quitting the subject of piano-quartets one yet more recent example, typifying some quite modern trends of thought, may be mentioned. Frank Bridge, in his brief one-movement "Phantasy" for this combination, shows a predilection for fanciful modes of presenting his ideas which well accords with the title given to the work. He is a master of effect, and

loves to juggle with his themes and startle with swift surprises. The main material of the second section, in D minor, has a subject which is strikingly novel, and much is made of it. In its simplest form the opening bars stand thus:—

EX. 219.

No less effective is the succeeding passage, where the theme darts away to the piano, and the strings supply a background in which there is much alertness and movement.

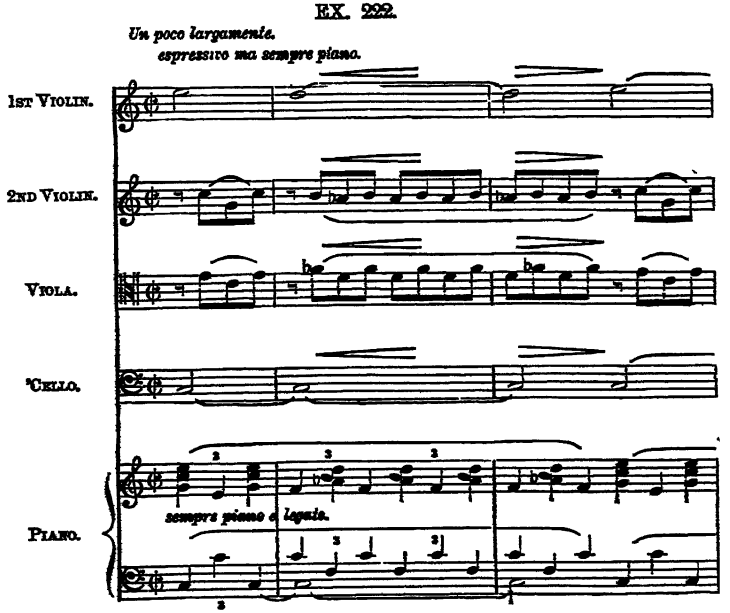
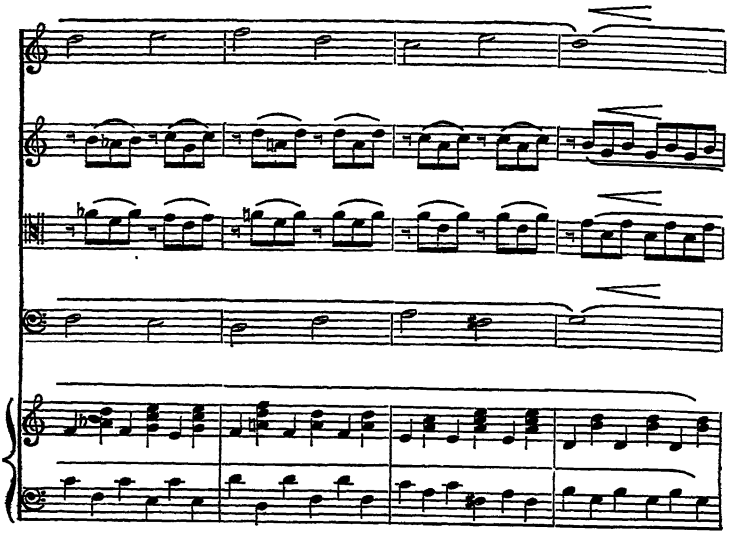
EX. 220.

Most novel of all is the climax of the section. The string parts form a solid harmonic structure on a double pedal, which, dwelling for the final bars upon a pungent discord, fades away without in the least relaxing the tension, the little piano figure curling upward like a thin column of drifting smoke. The way in which the strange sounds are set out before us is as masterly as it is original, and one may find a subtle pleasure in examining on paper what, in performance, seems almost too elusive to grasp.

EX. 221.



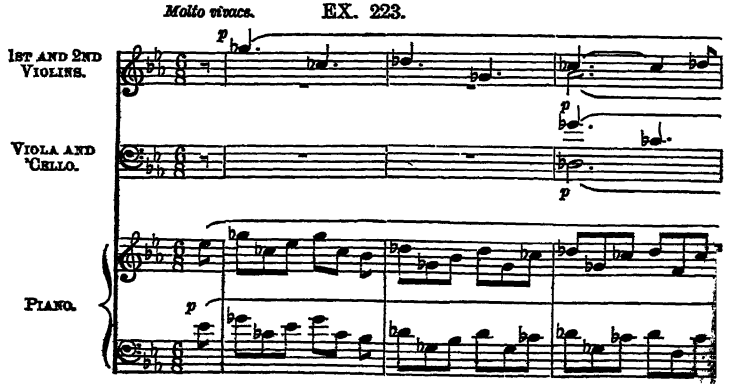
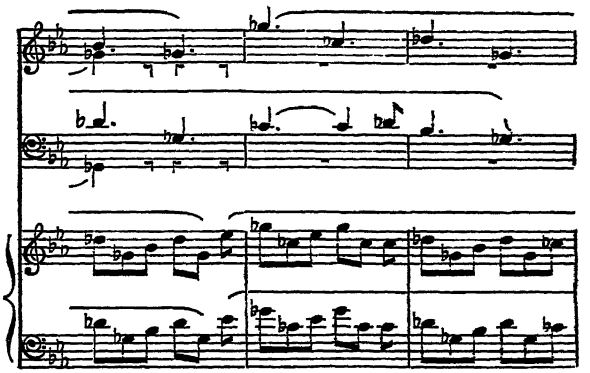
Much of the material already placed before the reader in this chapter will, of course, have as much direct bearing upon pianoforte quintets as upon the combinations already dealt with, but nevertheless there is still some further ground to cover, and a few partially cultivated tracts may be surveyed with a view to possible expansion. The form of the pianoforte quintet was, as has already been said, practically discovered by Schumann, and it is surprising that composers since his time have provided so few worthy successors to his famous work in E flat (Op. 44) which was published in 1843. It can hardly be questioned that a quintet for piano, two violins, viola, and 'cello is the most perfect combination of strings and keyboard instrument that has been devised for a string-quartet form a better balance with the piano, and is admittedly more satisfactory in itself than a string trio. It will already have been realised ~~in the extracts given~~ from quartets, that the usual function of the piano in such works is not merely to provide an additional part to the strings, but to supply a harmonic structure as complete in itself as the strings in combination, and capable of being used in the same way. Indeed, the employment of the piano for a single part, as in the second example given from Fauré is so exceptional as to acquire a special interest of its own.

It is obvious, therefore, that the more usual method of balancing the forces will be easier acquired with a body of four strings than with three, and their presence is likely to aid in the construction of a better piano part.

In the Schumann quintet, which is more remarkable for its musical value and the vitality of its ideas than for the aptness of its setting, the piano predominates unduly. Very little of it could be quoted as exemplary quintet-writing, though it is nearly all absolutely effective. The first movement depends almost entirely upon the piano for its harmonic basis: the strings when not doubling the actual notes of the piano part, or merely filling in, are generally engaged in playing isolated melodic phrases, and the effect is somewhat scrappy and disjointed in places. The second movement has some specially interesting features. Schumann here modifies his habit of doubling string and piano parts by combining different rhythms, as in the following example, where the effect of the piano triplets in conjunction with the quavers in the second violin and viola parts is extremely happy:—

EX. 222.

On the repetition of the same material later in the movement the piano has arpeggios in quaver triplets, while the strings preserve a similar demeanour, this mixture of rhythms proving equally felicitous.

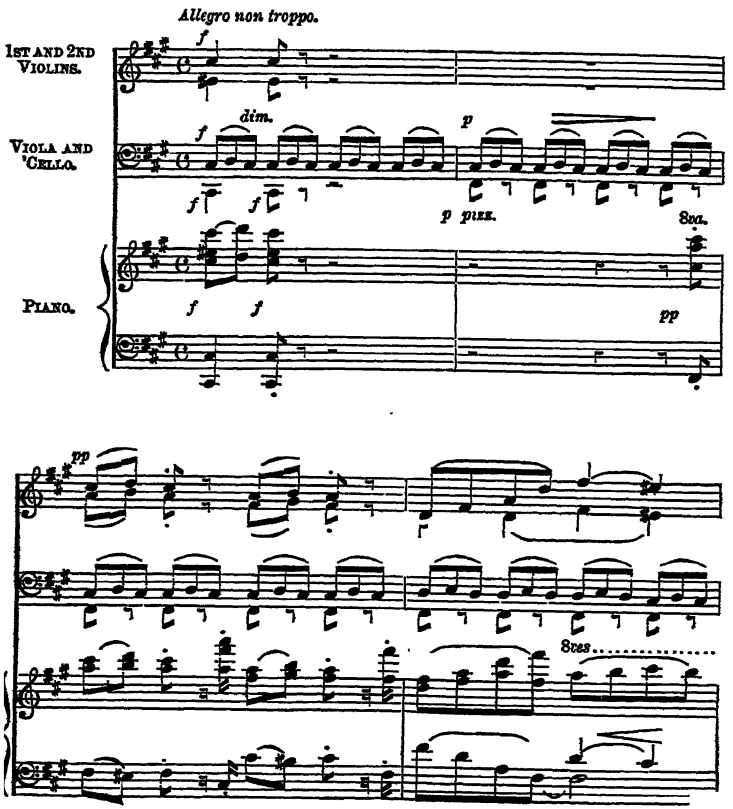
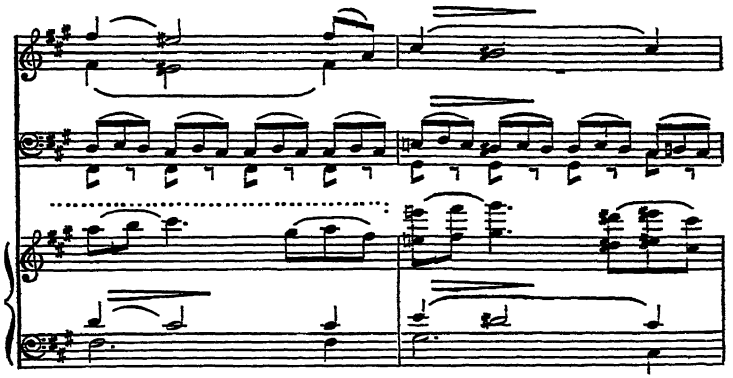
The Scherzo has a great deal of doubling of piano and string parts in scales, but in the first of its two trios there is some writing which exhibits the fanciful and charming device of following the outlines of a melody (in canon) in the curves of an accompaniment which murmurs in the background,

Molto vivace. EX. 223.

In the subject of the Finale repeated chords for the strings form the support to a forcible unison melody on the piano. The effect is a little square, but the character of the theme is here well suited to this often questionable method—as well suited as it is to the elaborate contrapuntal treatment vouchsafed in the Coda, for the presentation of which a piano quintet seems, however, hardly the most satisfactory choice of medium.

Schumann's initiative, and to a certain extent his methods, may be considered largely responsible for the existence of three great piano quintets by Brahms, Dvořák, and César Franck, all of which are wealthier in detail than their forerunner, and exhibit many notable developments and expansions.

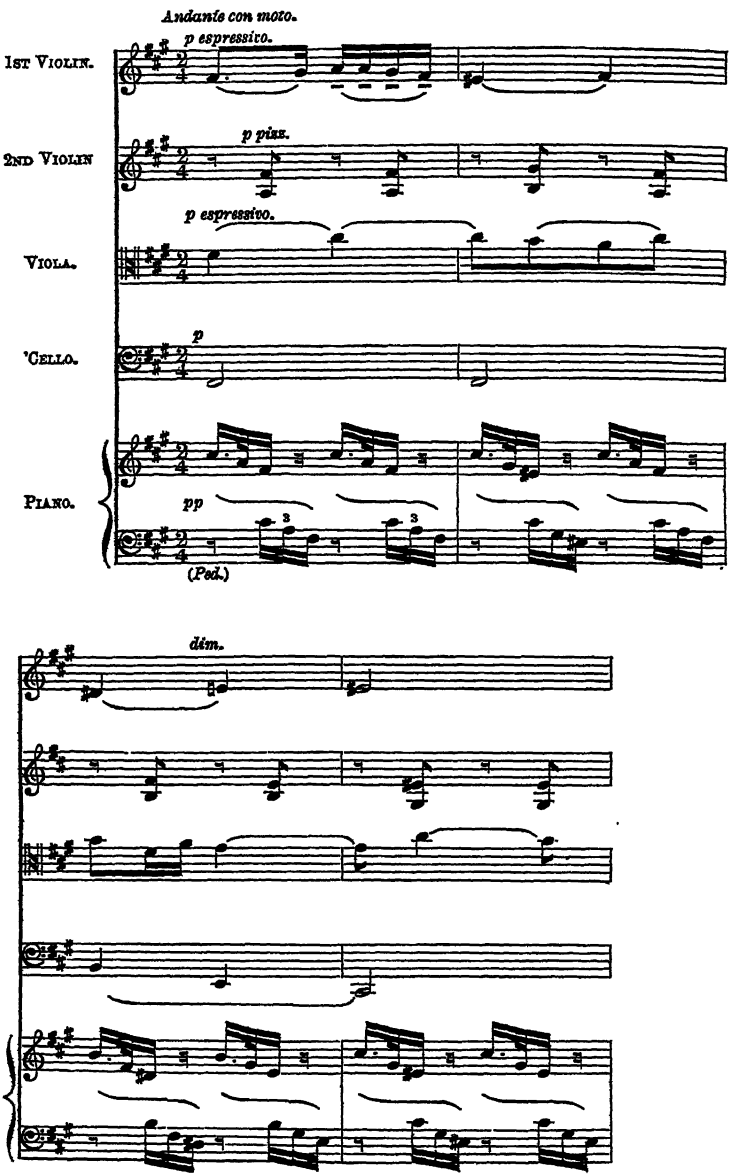
Of Brahms's writing for strings and piano so much has already been said that there is little to add at this juncture. His quintet, Op. 34, is, however, one of his richest and most splendid works. The string-writing is more elaborate than in the case of Schumann, and, it may be said, far more effectively suited to the instruments. The piano part seldom predominates, yet it is not by any means unimportant, and certainly not ungrateful. As in his trios and quartets he is careful to choose subjects which are readily interchangeable between piano and strings, whilst in addition he makes use of the increased strength of the latter in the devising of passages of

which the quartet is the groundwork and the piano an effective adjunct. The following bars from the first movement will not only illustrate this, but will also afford an example of pure piano-quintet writing which, for sheer clarity and appropriateness, would be difficult to excel. Not a note is wasted by doubling. The first and second violins support and give colour to the high piano melody, which is essentially pianistic in character and pitch; and the viola and 'cello have each their well-defined share in providing a rhythmic and harmonic base.

EX. 224.



The Dvořák Quintet in A, Op. 81 (published in 1881), is a far lighter composition, but it is especially noteworthy for the striking nature of its themes, and for the strong sense of colour that it exhibits throughout. The searcher for 'effects' will do well to dive deeply into this vivacious work, in which he will find many brilliant pages. There is always a fascination in peeping behind the scenes to see how things are done, and the arch-conjurer, Dvořák, produces such glittering effects from his diversity of rhythms (in which *pizzicato* notes, bowed melodies, and swinging pianoforte figures all play a share) that it is worth while specially dissecting some of the movements, all of which are conceived in the true spirit of Chamber Music, despite the marked character of the colouring employed.

In the second movement, labelled "Dumka" (a peculiar Bohemian piece, sometimes not very aptly translated as an "Elegy"), we shall find some of the best evidences of rhythmic mastery in the work. After the fashion of a Rondo the principal subject in F sharp minor occurs, in various guises, four times. This subject really consists of two very calm and solemn themes in combination, and its third statement—following closely upon a wild and frenzied episode in which all the instruments play with the utmost vigour—is perhaps, from the point of view of presentation, the most striking of all.

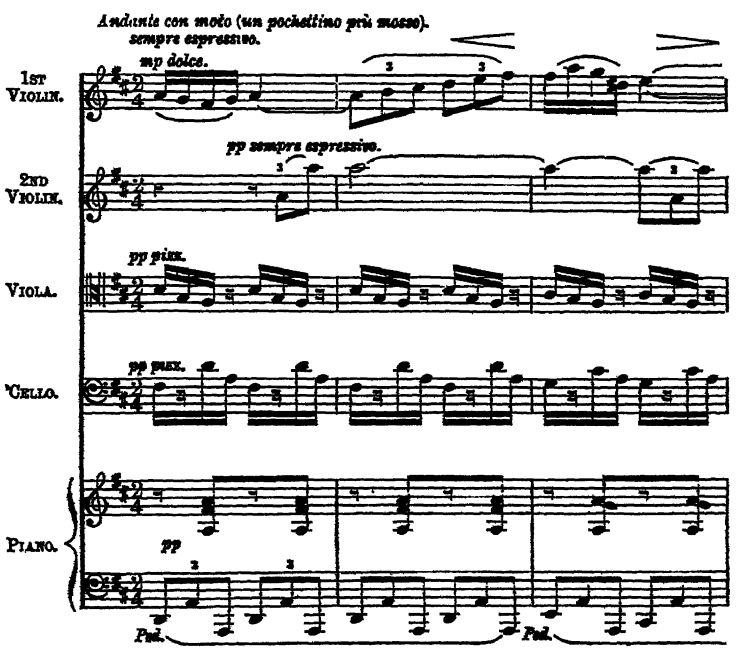
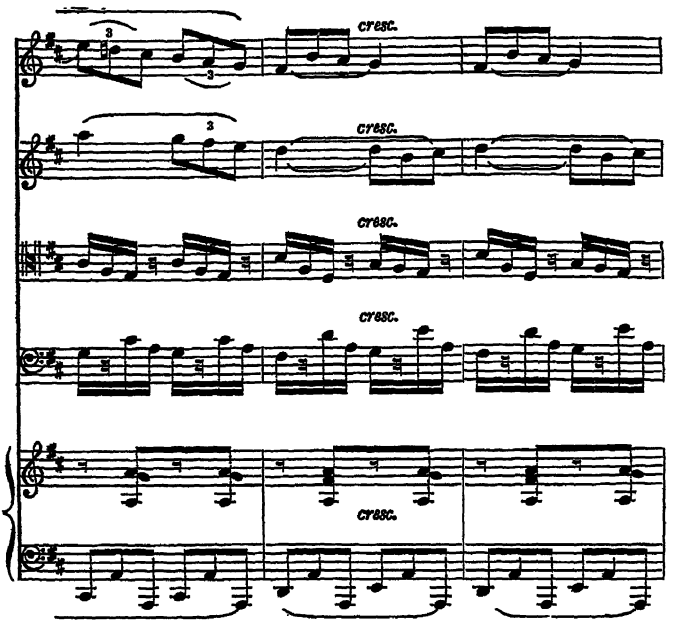
EX. 225.

Andante con moto.
1ST VIOLIN.
p espressivo.
2ND VIOLIN
p pizz.
VIOLA.
p espressivo.
'CELLO.
p
PIANO.
pp
3
3
(Ped.)
dim.

It will be seen that the duet is shared by the first violin and viola on this occasion, and that the viola has the uppermost line.

The *pizzicato* chords of the second violin are most telling, and the low notes of the 'cello here form a very satisfactory bass to the whole structure, for the piano part, though clearly defined, is but a thin wave of sound.

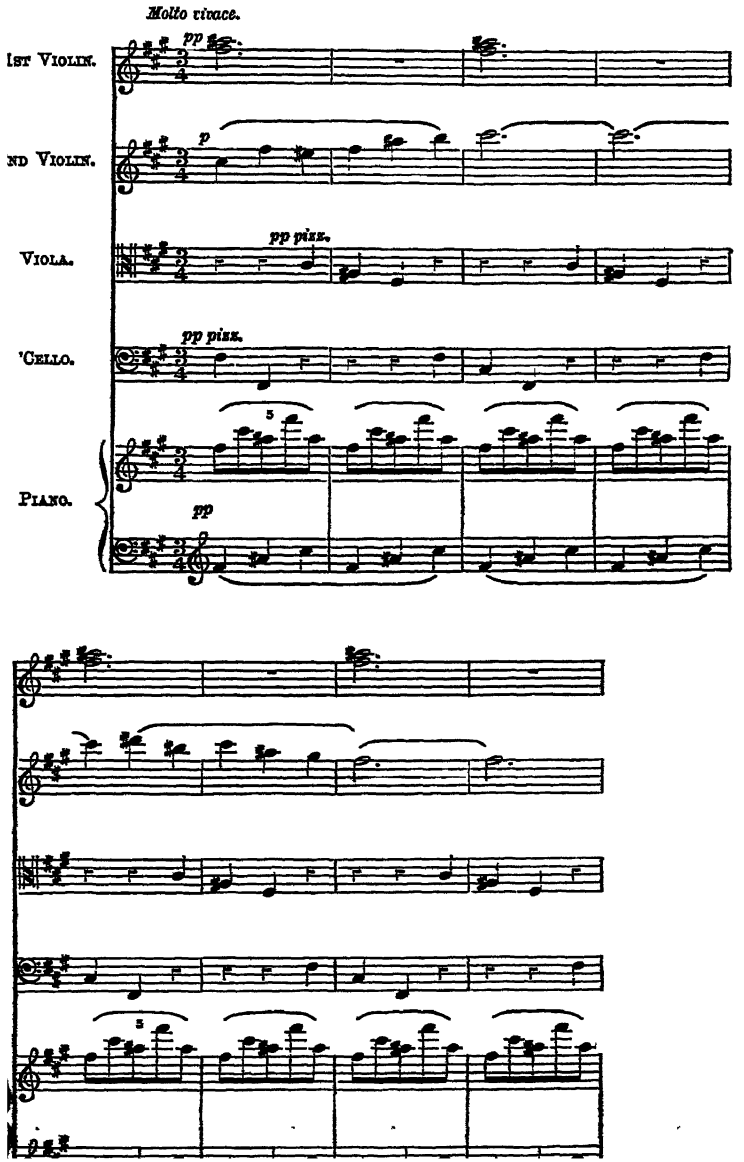
One very notable episode of this Dumka may also be quoted, if only for the skill shown in the mixing of rhythms and colours.

Coming first, as it does, after the very calm and solemn opening page, the *più mosso* from which the following bars are selected has a comparatively animated effect owing to the restlessness of the figuration:—

EX. 226.

The two violins clearly share the melodic interest, and the rest of the scheme consists entirely of accompaniment, but the accompaniment means much, and the *pizzicato* notes of the lower strings, combined with the quiet rocking motion expressed in the pianoforte part, contribute very materially to the success of the ensemble.

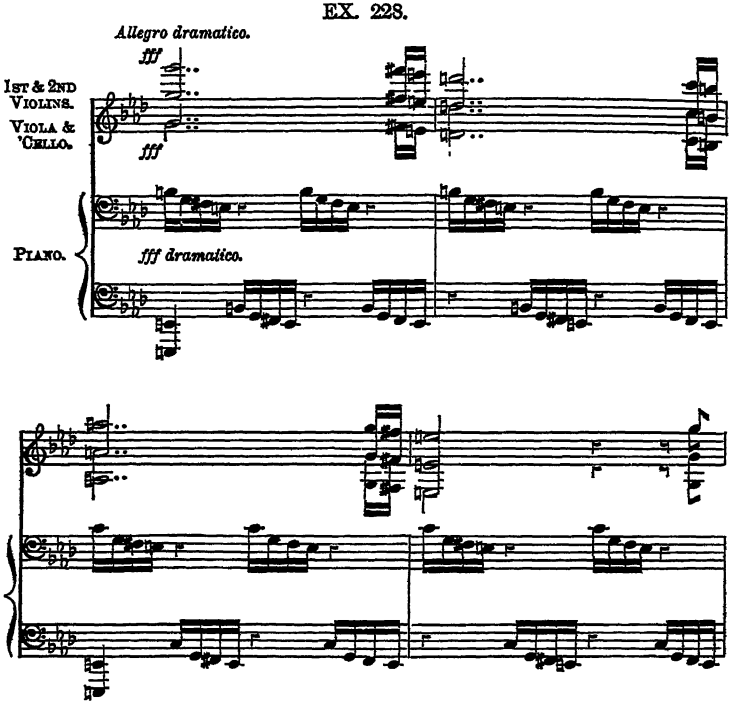
A like ease and facility distinguish the ingenuities which are pressed into service in the Scherzo—a wholly delectable movement where not a bar misses the effect at which it aims.

It is difficult to make choice where all is so fanciful, but the eight bars here given may be deemed a fair specimen of the delicate workmanship which lightens the simplest and most unsophisticated melody and makes it sparkle in its setting:—

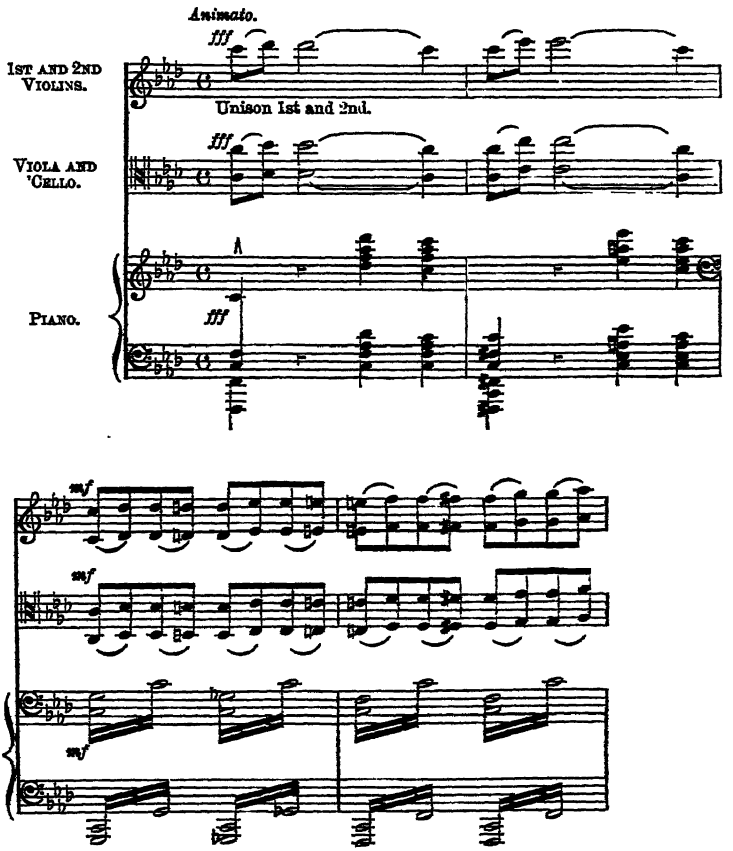
EX. 227.

Molto vivace.
1ST VIOLIN.
pp
2ND VIOLIN.
p
VIOLA.
pp pizz.
'CELLO.
pp pizz.
PIANO.
5
pp
5

The Quintet in F minor of César Franck, probably written in the same year as that of Dvořák, is nevertheless a work which more definitely embodies the modern point of view. Besides being a powerful composition it shows us many hitherto unexplored methods of part-distribution. As in the case of the same master's violin and piano sonata, this quintet may be regarded as the principal forerunner of a large class of more recent ensemble works.

The four strings are treated less as a quartet than formerly, and more as a single mass of string sound. There is a deep gloom pervading the work, which is so intensely dramatic in feeling that it demands an almost crude strength of outline which seems, at times, too spacious for Chamber Music.

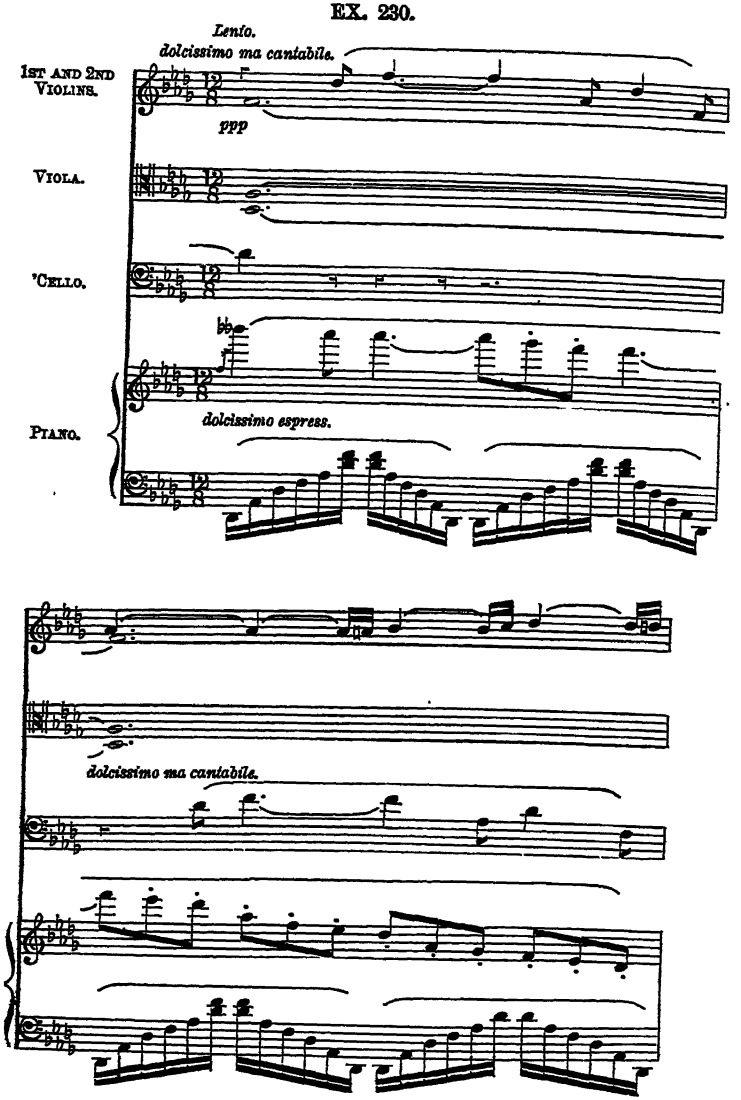
EX. 228.

There is a great deal of unison writing for the strings similar in character to that shown above, and the piano has every-

where an enormously interesting part. A fine passage occurring at a big climax towards the end of the first movement is, it must be admitted, extremely orchestral, though the effect secured is one of tremendous breadth and intensity, and so completely accords with the spirit of the movement that it sounds legitimate enough.

EX. 229.

Moreover, the slow movement reveals many new beauties of pure ensemble-writing besides a great depth of sentiment. Amongst many striking episodes one may recall the passage

beginning as follows, which shows another, and less questionable, side of the composer's art:—

EX. 230.

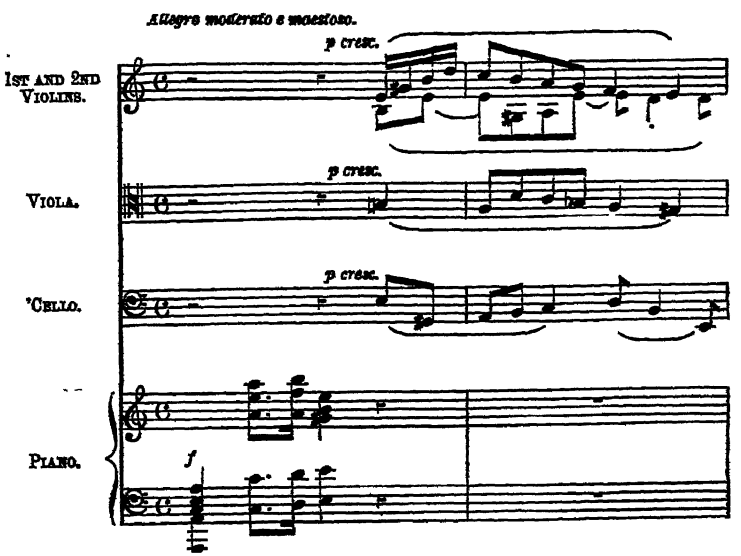
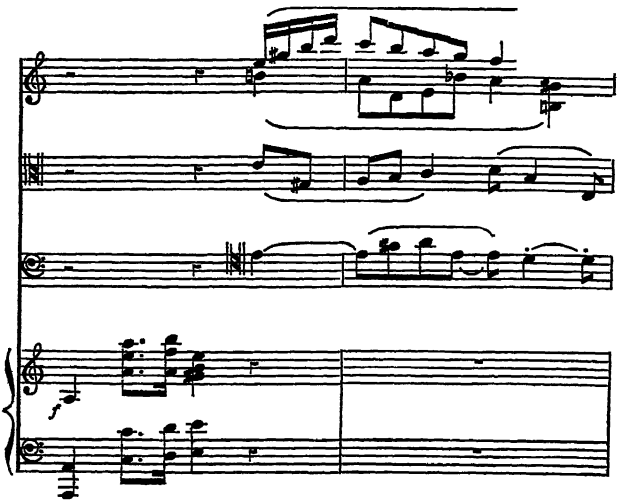


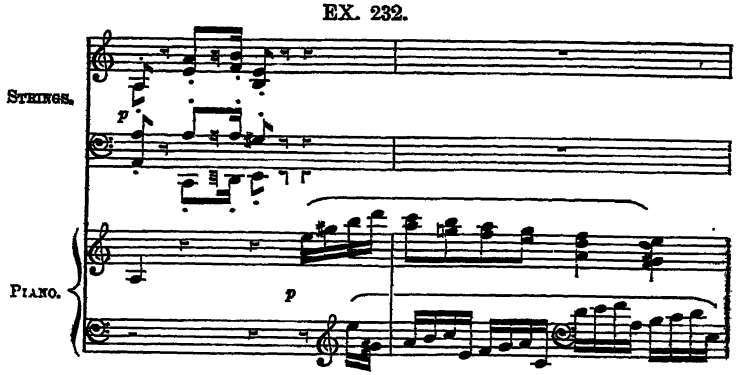
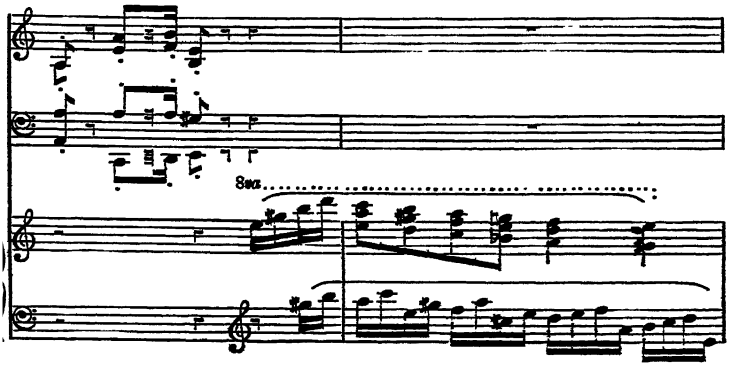
Delicacy and sweetness could scarcely have been better expressed in music than they are here, and such tenderness brings welcome refreshment in the midst of the prevailing oppressive atmosphere.

A few brief quotations from three of the most noteworthy quintets by living composers may now be set forth in order to show some further devices afforded by the combination of strings and piano.

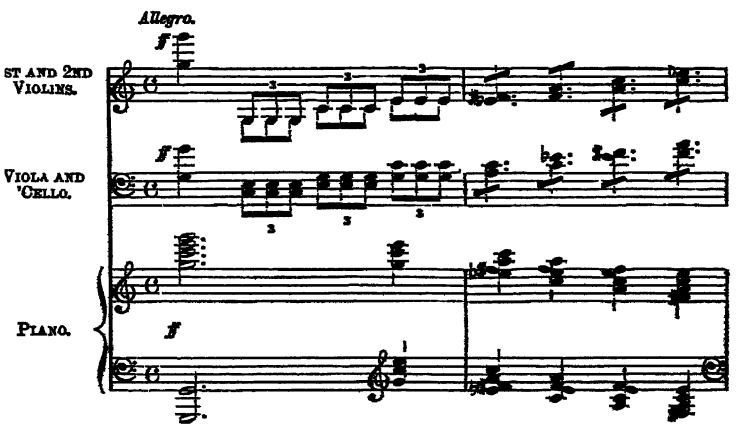
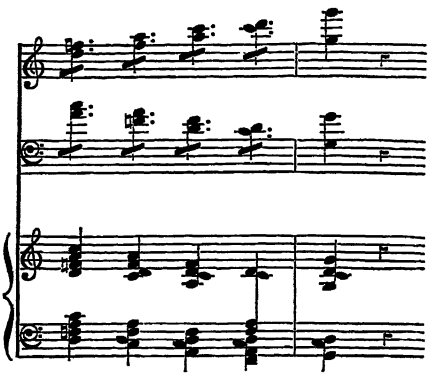
There is much deft treatment in the quintet of Saint-Saëns, Op. 14. It is a work which is seldom played in this country, but it is thoroughly characteristic of a composer whose easy skill and surety of touch have been demonstrated in every branch of musical composition.

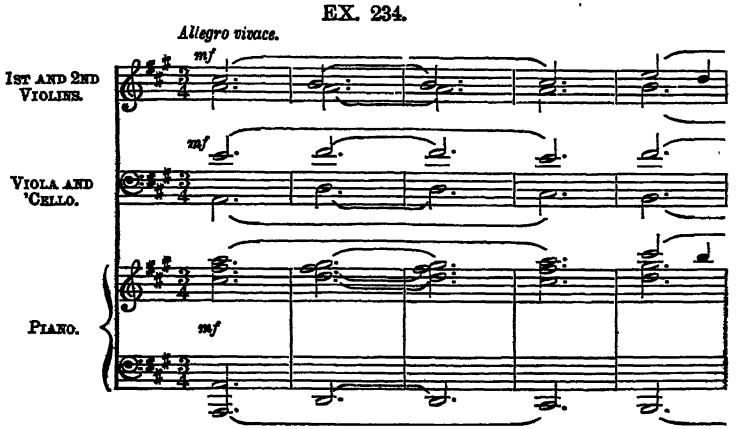
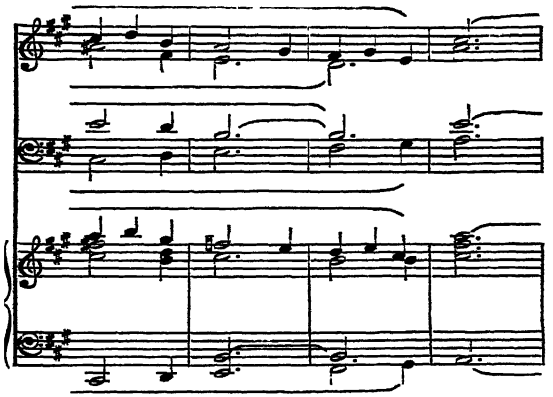
The ensuing bars from the opening movement will show how the string-quartet can be utilised to continue a melody begun by the piano:—

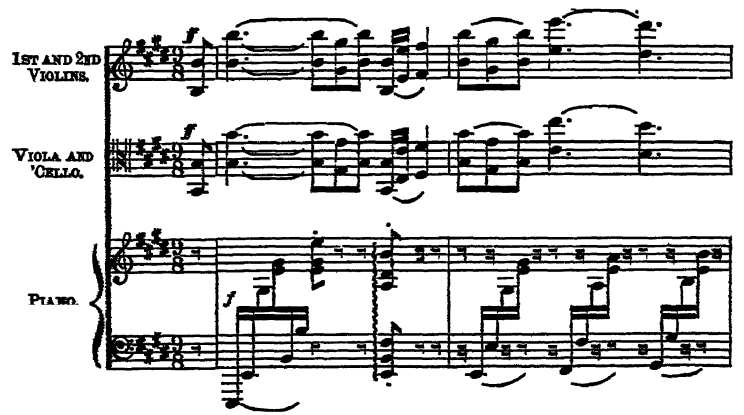
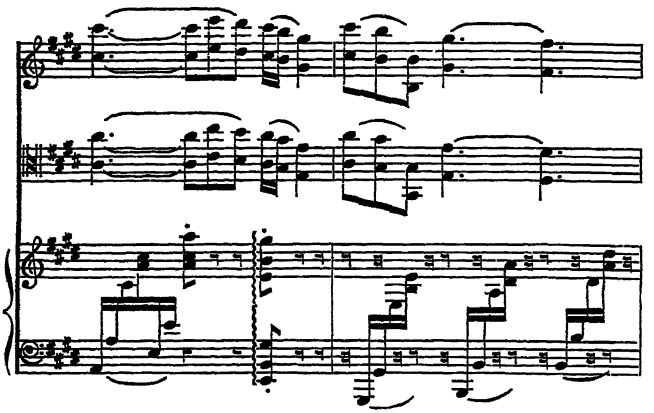
EX. 231.

Notice should be taken of the positions given to the 'cello and viola in the last two measures, and the evenly fluent character of the string-writing. In the music which immediately follows this passage the answering phrases of the melody come closer together, and the scheme is thus split up into half-bar figures Later the position of affairs is reversed, and it may be noted that the distribution of the parts is altered, with facile skill, to suit the case—the piano having a semiquaver passage in the left hand, whilst the strings play the opening phrase *p* and *staccato.*

EX. 232.



Ernst von Dohnanyi in his youthful Quintet in C minor,)p. 1, indulges in some instructive methods of writing which nay profitably be investigated. In the following example, rom the busy Coda of the first movement, he shows how the trings can effectively be made to move in a body in contrary notion with the chords of the piano:—

EX. 233.

This illustration shows also that repeated notes, seldom desirable in a string quartet, may more often be suitably used when that combination is employed in association with the piano, especially in loud and strenuous moments. In the trio of the Scherzo of the same work Dohnanyi disposes his parts in a clear and simple way, which provides an interesting variant upon the method of merely doubling piano and strings so frequently adopted by Schumann. It will be seen that all the instruments of the quartet play the same notes as the piano in the octave above, the piano having four-part harmony as well as the strings, without actually doubling a single note at the same pitch. The result is rich and sonorous in a transparent and unpretentious way.

EX. 234.

The finely-wrought Quintet in C minor of James Friskin (also an Op. 1) is not a whit less distinguished than that of Dohnanyi, though no doubt its British origin will, for a time, militate against its universal acceptance. One brief quotation may be given since it presents an excellent example of the use of all the strings in octaves at a big melodic climax. The music is not, as in the case of the extracts given from César Franck, dramatic in tone, but shows how a broad healthy tune, strong enough to impress without any trappings whatsoever, may be effectively disposed in a way that fully reveals its essential substance and dignity.

EX. 235.

In bringing a long chapter to a conclusion the author is conscious that, with all his prolixity, he has only been able to touch upon the veriest fringe of a large subject. In dealing with quartets and quintets, for instance, the illustrations have been practically confined to passages where all the component parts of these combinations are used at once. It will, he hopes, be self-evident that to keep all the players continually at work would result in monotony, however skilfully the composer might contrive to balance the instrumental forces requisitioned. Solo passages are therefore frequently desirable for the sake of contrast—the piano may often be used alone for many bars at a stretch, and so may the strings, and any of the resources which have been noted in connection with duet-sonatas or trios may be brought into play when any special variety or lightness is considered desirable.

If a double-bass is chosen for the fifth instrument in a piano quintet, in place of a second violin (as it is in the famous work by Schubert known as "The Trout"), the student may be referred to the remarks upon its treatment given in Chapter VI., and advised to use the combination mainly as a piano quartet, frequently employing the double-bass to strengthen the lowest part. There are, however, few good instances of this species of ensemble in existence, although a noteworthy example by Hermann Goetz is well worth studying.

Our own countryman, Josef Holbrooke, has written a very striking sextet in which the ordinary piano quintet is supplemented by a double-bass, with admirable results, and it is perhaps a pity that experiments in similar directions are not more frequently prosecuted.

To all but very severe purists, who object on principle to combining the string quartet with an instrument tuned on the system of equal temperament, finely conceived piano quintets must be an unfailing delight, and though we may admit that a measure of that serene and absolute perfection which belongs only to unadulterated string-playing is sacrificed, or partially hidden, when a pianist is added to the ensemble-party, there are compensations. All who play the piano, at all events, must realise that such works have been a means of dignifying the instrument of their choice, and of drawing from it qualities no less distinctive and valuable than those which receive prominence in solo-writing.

And, if for this alone, the piano quintet did not vainly spring into existence when Schumann, at the height of his powers, wrote the inspiring work by which he is chiefly remembered to-day. His lead has not been followed by a legion, but the worth of a distinguished few has in no capacity been more clearly demonstrated than in the isolated works in this particular form which so handsomely adorn the Chamber Music literature of modern times.

CHAPTER VIII.

WIND INSTRUMENTS.

WHEN we come to consider the employment of wind instruments in Chamber Music, we are face to face with many new problems. In dealing with stringed instruments we have seen that, being similar in formation and anatomy, all the members of the violin family are similar in tone; and stress has been laid upon the necessity of making the utmost capital out of the actual differences in shades of *timbre* that do exist amongst them, in order to gain contrast and a certain measure of colouring in ensemble work.

Before we can satisfactorily handle wind combinations we shall have to learn how to balance instruments of dissimilar mechanisms and technical capabilities, totally different tone-qualities, and varying degrees of body and power. If we had merely to deal, shall we say, with oboes, English horns, and bassoons (double-reed instruments of like pattern and organism), the problems to be encountered would be comparatively easy of solution. But in mixing the varied qualities of such instruments as the flute, the clarinet, the oboe, and the horn, we are obliged continually to reckon with the fundamental differences of tone and effect produced, severally, by blowing through a hole into a narrow pipe, through a single or double reed into cylindrical or conical tubes, or through a cup-shaped mouthpiece into a curved and winding metal passage. Furthermore, we must learn to recognise their strength and value when combined with strings or piano, either singly or in blended masses.

It may be said at once that no wind player has quite the

same control over tone-quality or intonation that is possessed by a string player. In modern times great improvements have been effected in the mechanism of wind instruments, and good chromatic scales have become practicable upon them all, whereas years ago these were uncertain on some instruments and impossible on others. So that the composer of to-day —having a more perfect machinery at his command, whilst the problems as to tone-colour and balance remain as they were in Mozart's time—may find that these greatly increased executive facilities expose him to fresh dangers, inasmuch as they may induce him to write what is certainly *possible* but quite unsuitable.

The musician has, however, another machinery to take into account—the machinery of human lungs and muscles, which remains just as it was when the first rude pipes and reeds were stirred to music by the breath of man. If he is accustomed to write for strings or piano, he must remember that wind instruments cannot be made to play for very long without a break, as the players need occasional rests for breathing and the relief of lip-tension; and if he is writing a whole composition for wind alone, he must not keep all his forces continuously working, but split them up, now and again, into smaller sections. Even if this were not a necessary precaution from the practical standpoint, it would still be desirable in a musical sense, for wind instruments, *en masse*, are heavier and noisier than strings, and it is important to do everything possible to lighten the sound whenever an opportunity is afforded.

Having said thus much by way of preamble, an attempt will now be made to explain the main characteristics of the wind instruments in general use in Chamber Music, and to give examples of each in turn used in combination with strings or piano: after this has been done, the more difficult matter of blending these heterogeneous factors together in a satisfactory way will briefly be dealt with, and passages quoted to show how successfully all obstacles can be surmounted by the exercise of careful manipulation and discreet musicianship.

The highest-pitched wind instrument which will be considered here is the flute, the shrill piccolo being altogether foreign to the character of Chamber Music.

Despite its elasticity, and the admirable effect of its tone in combination with strings, the flute has been very scantily provided for by great composers in their chamber works. In the quintets for wind and piano by both Mozart and Beethoven the oboe is employed instead of the flute, doubtless because of its greater power of penetration and more decided colouring. Yet the flute is a markedly poetic instrument. It is limpid and pure, and if lacking in warmth and quite incapable of passionate excitement, it is an admirable medium for the expression of sweetness, languor, and tender longing. It can be weird and unearthly, playful or melancholy, with equal facility. The quality of the lower notes has been well described by R. S. Rockstro as a compromise between the somewhat nasal tone of the oboe and the mournful cooing of a dove, whilst the upper notes are bright and cheerful, gaining their greatest effect in agile and rapid music.

When combining the flute with other instruments, it is necessary to keep in constant remembrance the fact that the lower middle tones have very little strength and no penetrating *timbre*, and are therefore very easily overpowered. The very low notes, rich in quality, require a great deal of breath, and it is therefore injudicious to write too continuously in the lowest octave, which is extremely tiring for the player.

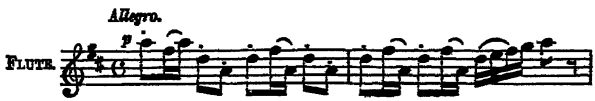
Taking everything into consideration the flute in Chamber Music is likely to prove far more effective in a combination of few instruments, where its gentle individuality may predominate, than in works designed in seven or eight parts: it has no place in either the Septet of Beethoven or the Octet of Schubert, where its delicate characteristics might easily have been swamped and destroyed.

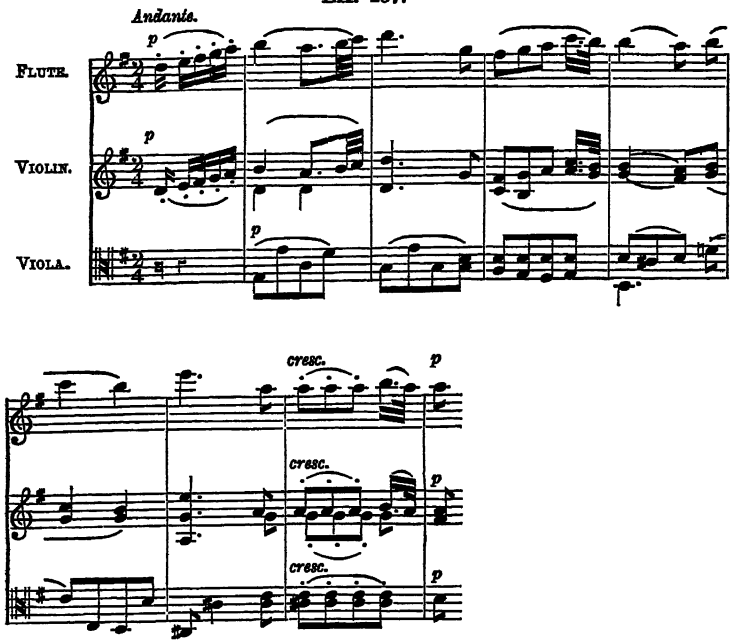
Flute solo-music is not generally of high rank, and the superficial agility which characterises most of it has asserted itself also in Chamber Music in many instances where the instrument has been admitted. The flute, nevertheless, has had its devotees. Kuhlau, a voluminous and serious-minded, if not a

great composer, devoted nearly his whole life to the writing of ensemble music in which it figured. Weber has used the instrument in a trio (with violoncello and piano), and Haydn composed two trios for two flutes and violoncello which are worthy of close inspection.

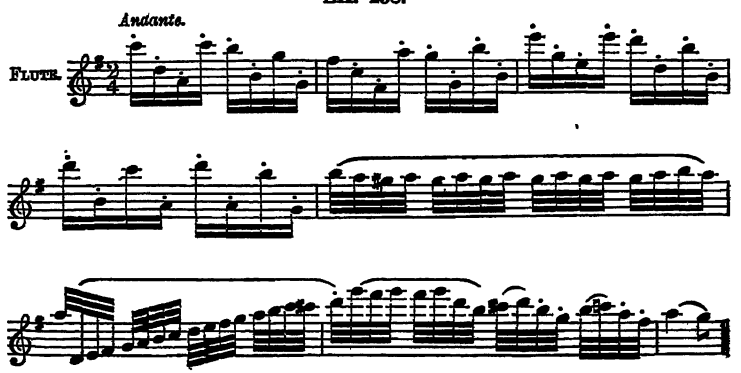
The student will, however, find more and better examples of the flute's varied activities in orchestral scores: for the most apt use of its medium register he may be referred to a well-known interlude in Gluck's "Orfeo," and some beautiful music in the second act of the same composer's "Armide": Mozart's "Zauberflöte" will provide him with many passages of clear expressiveness: whilst the concluding pages of the Scherzo from Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream" music will afford a better model for the use of a soft velvety staccato tone in notes of equal value than can be instanced elsewhere.

Perhaps the most noteworthy, and at the same time the most popular, chamber work in which the flute has a part is the Serenade for Flute, Violin, and Viola, Op. 25, of Beethoven, a most refreshing composition, full of happy ideas and playful good humour. The first of the six miniature movements of which the work is composed begins with the utterance, by the flute alone, of a kind of fairy trumpet-call:—

EX. 236.

There is a certain affinity between the flute and the trumpet, and passages of this character are always effective. In the theme of the fourth movement, an Andante with variations, Beethoven uses the flute to double the violin in the octave above, producing, with the aid of double-stoppings on the stringed instruments, a singularly full sound as well as a very pleasant colouring.

EX. 237.

Later, when agility of movement is required, the flute is entirely in its element, and the following extract from one of the variations shows, in small space, some of the most suitable forms of passage-work available:—

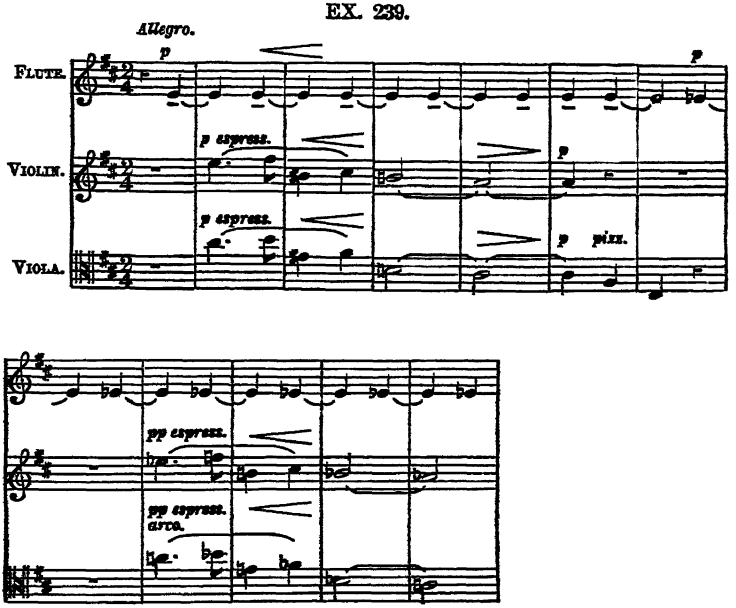
EX. 238.



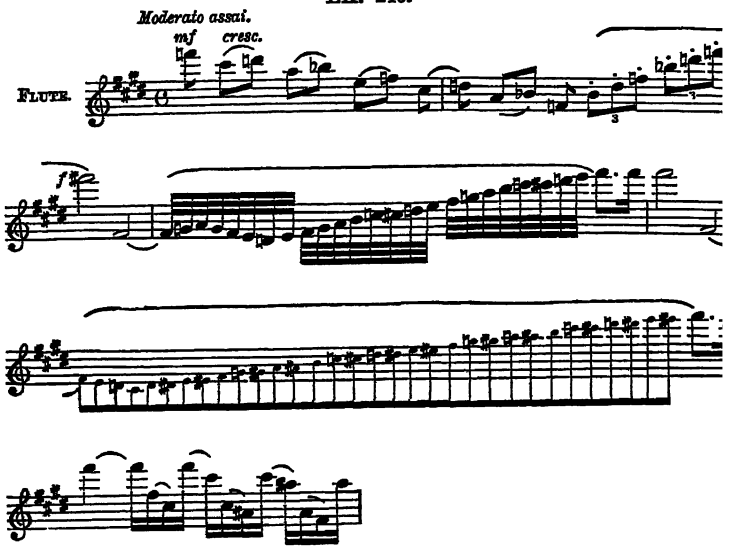
The *staccato* semiquavers, skipping wide intervals, are particularly effective and quite easy of performance, whilst the bird-like trill, the slurred scale, and the dainty phrasing of the two final bars are all essentially flute music *par excellence.*

The early flutes which executed the music written by Mozart and Beethoven were not so perfectly constructed as those in use at the present day. Their low notes were uncertain and liable to be so out of tune that these composers were quite wise in using them very sparingly.

Nowadays a musician could devise many passages of special effect with their aid, and Max Reger in his Serenade, Op. 77 (for the same combination as the work just discussed), shows us a use for the flute undreamed of by Beethoven.

EX. 239.

Reger's horn notes are, in their way, quite as suggestive as Beethoven's trumpet-call, but, unfortunately, the work as a whole is not very distinctive, and cannot be considered a striking addition to flute literature.

The flute tone blends exceedingly well with the pian better indeed than that of any other wind instrument. the student will consult the well-known and very charmin Romance for this combination by Saint-Saëns he will see ho wide is the possible scope of the flute's expressive and activ powers, and may learn some lessons in the art of writin an adequate accompaniment which will not obscure then Amongst other features displayed in the work the speci effectiveness of rapid chromatic scales, extending over almo the entire compass of the instrument, may be duly noted.

EX. 240.

Two modern works for flute and piano by British compose may be mentioned as well worthy of critical examination: bright Suite by York Bowen; and a poetic Idyll by Katharin Eggar, in which the suitability of the flute for suggesting th beauty of bird-songs is recognised in a delightful and mo sensitive manner.

The oboe, or hautboy, is a double-reed instrument of ancie lineage, and it holds its own proudly to-day, being indispensab

in the orchestra and of great value in Chamber Music. The tone of the oboe is thin and not powerful, but peculiarly penetrating. In slow movements it is capable of tender pleading expression, and in music of a pastoral character it is very happily suited, suggesting, as it does, the rural simplicity of a shepherd's pipe.

The oboe has not the elasticity or easy brilliance of the flute, nor is it capable of anything like the range of expression of the clarinet, and, if it has some power of agility, extremely rapid passages are seldom well fitted for it unless of a sportive or humorous character. It is, however, quite in its element in music of a merry or vivacious type where the *tempo* is moderately quick, and the upper and medium registers only are used. The instrument has but a small range of effective notes. The tones between

and its highest note

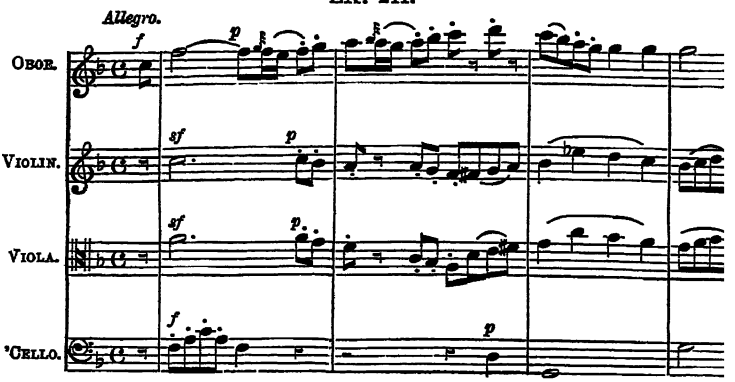
are over-shrill, and, though one can write with safety as low as the B below middle C, the notes beneath

are inclined to be rough and harsh in quality.

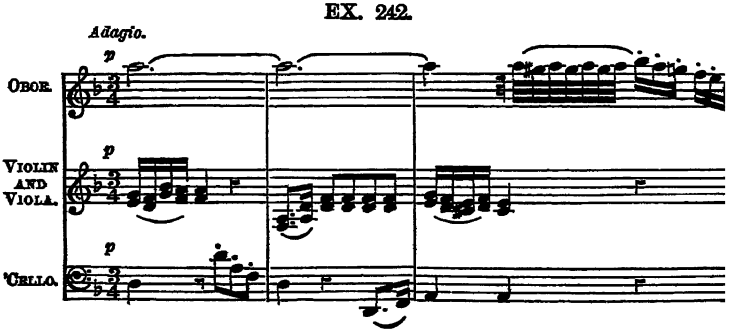
The oboe is ~~therefore~~ the most limited in compass of all wood-wind instruments, and on this account, as well as by reason of its distinctive and somewhat monotonous tone-colour, it is very difficult to obtain variety and contrast when the instrument is continuously playing. Thus, when listening to Beethoven's trio for two oboes and English horn (a species of oboe with tenor compass), it must be confessed that the hearer grows sadly weary of the reedy tone without intermission long before the four movements are over, and he feels, reluctantly,

that the music itself, in spite of its intrinsic worth, is gradual losing its power of appeal as the performance proceeds.

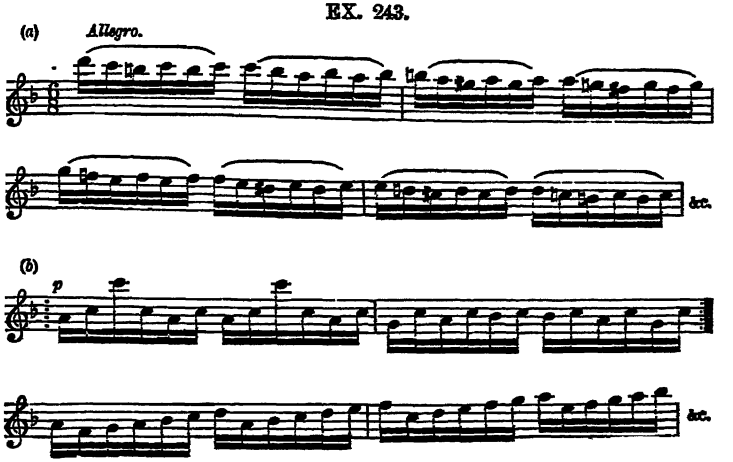
If the oboe is combined with strings or with other wi instruments of a different *timbre*, these difficulties will natural be considerably lessened. There is a quartet for oboe, violi viola, and 'cello, which may serve as the substance of y another object-lesson, from that unfailing fountain-head, Moza The first movement opens with this pleasant rustic theme:—

EX. 241.

The music here perfectly accords with the genius of th instrument, and, in the many florid ornamental episodes whic succeed, a like sympathy is manifested.

Holding notes on the oboe are very effective, as this passag from the Adagio of the same work will show:—

EX. 242.

It is the first entry of the instrument in the movement, and the soft sustained tone strikes a tender pleading note which is almost human in its appeal. In the final Rondo Mozart writes many agile flute-like figures for the oboe, of which the following extracts (one phrased and the other staccato) are prominent instances:—

EX. 243.



With the piano the oboe is less well mated, and the only notable composer who has achieved anything like success with this duet combination is Schumann, whose Romances have many points of interest and charm. They are, however, quite brief and not very important pieces; such a work as a sonata for oboe and piano would probably prove entirely unsatisfactory, for the extreme limitations of the wind instrument would hamper a composer in the conception of his piano part, and its lack of variety of *timbre* and insufficient technical resource would be keenly felt were it compelled to predominate throughout any composition of constructive importance. Its real usefulness is mainly in its prominence as a melodic voice in works where other wind instruments are employed, and of this function much will be said later in the chapter.

Of far greater importance at the present juncture is the clarinet, which is of all wind instruments the best adapted for use in Chamber Music, and, therefore, the most generally provided for by notable composers. The clarinet (in which a single reed is employed) is supposed to have been invented about the year 1690, though it was not generally used by any great writers until the time of Mozart, who wrote several ensemble works in which it figured prominently.

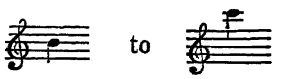
This instrument has several advantages over other members of the wood-wind family. It has a large compass and a singularly even tone which, in the hands of an artist, can be graded and controlled to a nicety. It is capable of playing rapidly and brilliantly, and its powers of varied expression are great: moreover, the mellow tones it produces blend uncommonly well with the strings.

The only two clarinets in general use in Chamber Music are those in the keys of B flat and A. Being what are called 'transposing instruments,' the written music will be lowered a tone and a minor third respectively in actual performance. This gives to the A clarinet the power of playing as low a note as

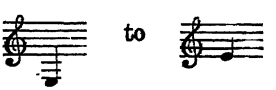
for the compass of the written part may extend, if needed, from

Even higher notes are possible, but the quality of ton obtained on notes above

is piercing and rather unpleasant. On the whole the writer of chamber music will be wise to rely upon what is called the 'acute register,' extending from about



for passages in which brightness of tone is aimed at; and upon the 'grave register' (or Chalumeau)



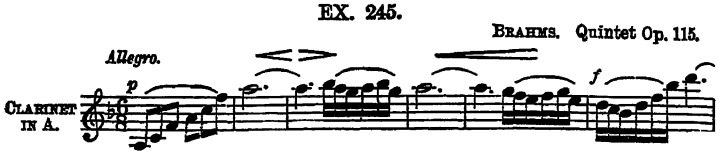
when deep expressiveness, power, or quasi-dramatic strength are demanded by the character of the music.

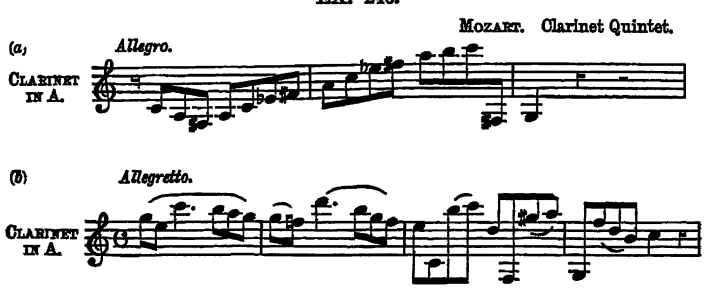
In making choice between the B flat and A clarinets, the composer will, of course, be chiefly guided by the key which he has selected for his work. Generally speaking, it will be more convenient to use the former for flat keys and the latter for keys with sharp signatures, but there are certain keys for which either instrument is readily adapted. It is important to realise, therefore, that there is another consideration besides mere convenience to be borne in mind. The two instruments differ somewhat in *timbre*. That in B flat is clear, pure, and incisive, and perhaps better adapted for the execution of florid passages than its fellow, whilst that in A, with its incomparably sweet tone, is in some ways more suited to music of a gentle nature, and less generally effective where brilliance of execution is required. The difference, if subtle and slight, is none the less real.

The higher the pitch of the clarinet, the less refined and attractive the tone. For that reason the clarinets in C, sometimes available for orchestral music, ~~are not brought forward here for consideration, since they~~ must be accounted too harsh and assertive for chamber works. As a rule, players of the instrument prefer the clarinet in B flat, and this preference should certainly not be lost sight of in the writing of ensemble music, in which the interest and good-will of

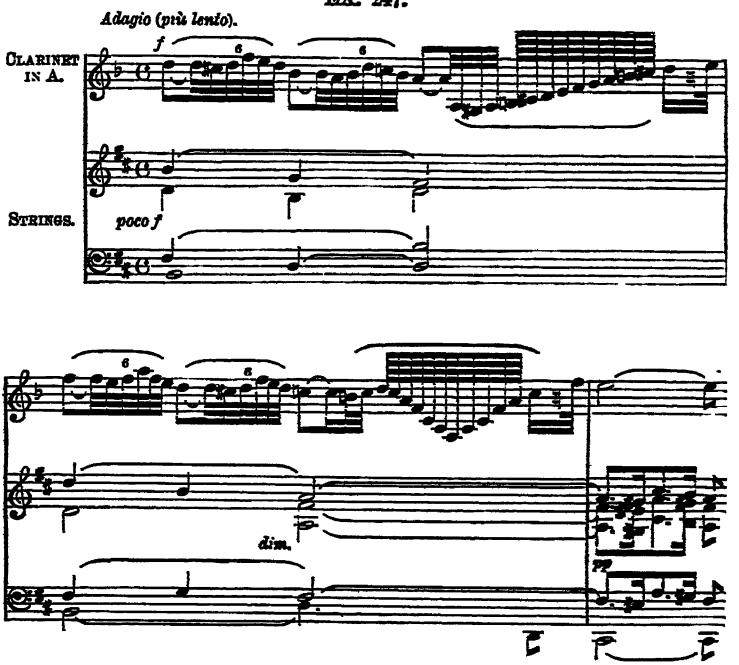
individual performers counts for so much. Both Mozart and Brahms, however, in their clarinet quintets, which afford the finest obtainable examples of the combination of this instrument with strings, make use of the clarinet in A. It is noteworthy that in each of these works the instrument makes its first entry with a passage of arpeggio construction:—

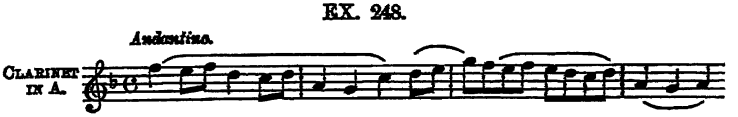
EX. 244.

EX. 245.

Arpeggio figures are, it is clear, peculiarly suited to the genius of the clarinet, whose large compass and mobile tone permit sweeping passages of wide range to be played with singular surety and effect.

EX. 246.

In the slow movement of the Brahms quintet this native elasticity is seized upon to give utterance to music of surging intensity. It is impossible to conceive the following bars, for instance, apart from the colour and essentially liquid flow of

the clarinet's tone. The swoop of the passage is wonderful, and it forms a superb example of rhapsodical treatment and impulse in Chamber Music:—

EX. 247.

The easy flow and simple sentiment of the Andantino of the same work show that the clarinet is well-suited, too, in melodies of a smooth and elegant type. It is the wind instrument that leads with this tuneful strain:—

EX. 248.

the viola and 'cello accompanying, forming a unity of rich tone which gives a definite colour to the whole section. It is

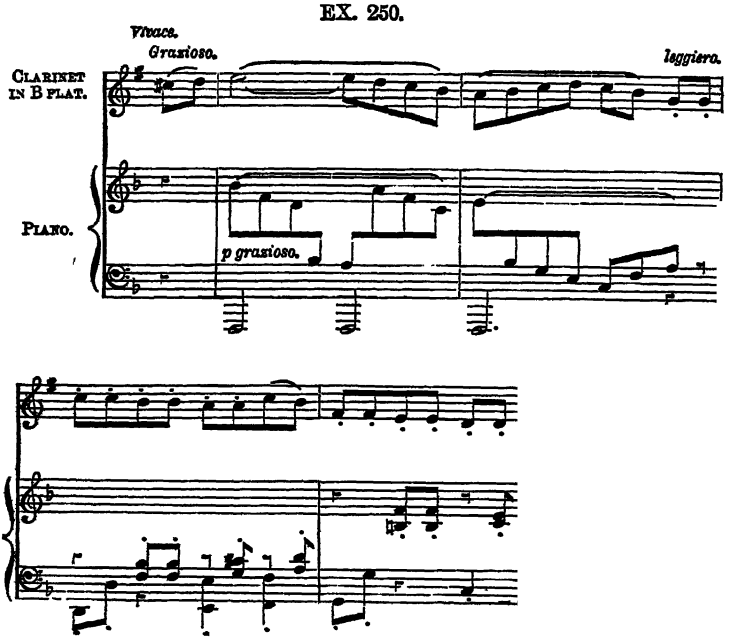
worthy of notice, touching Brahms' insight into the capabilities of this instrument, that in the ensuing Presto non assai, for which this Andantino is a kind of mental preparation, the theme given forth by the first violin,

EX. 249.

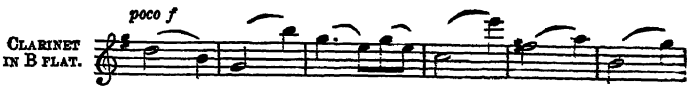
is not once in the course of the movement allotted to the clarinet, for which it is imperfectly suited.

Not that the clarinet has no power of expressing delicacy and lightness. The same composer in his Sonata for Piano and Clarinet in F minor (Op. 120, No. 1) gives the theme of the Finale to the wind instrument, and it is a theme which possesses, in addition to these qualities, a slight touch of almost humorous expression.

EX. 250.



The staccato notes in that particular part of the instrument's compass are so quaint in effect that it is difficult to hear them without a smile. The most characteristic mood of all, from the melodic standpoint, is perhaps achieved when the composer lights upon a tune which is not only expressive and song-like, but makes use of the big sweeping skips which have already been noted as appropriate to the instrument. This rare combination of properties may be observed in the first movement of this same work in a prominent theme which begins in the following way:—

EX. 251.

Although Brahms in this sonata, and in its companion in E flat of the same opus, has contrived some delightful combinations of sound, it must be confessed that the association of the clarinet and the piano without the addition of other instruments is seldom satisfactory. Truth to tell, the clarinet tone blends but indifferently well with so rigid an instrument, and had not Brahms been inspired by the quite exceptionally sensitive and mobile playing of a great artist, it is doubtful if he would have cared to write two such important works for this unpromising combination. It may almost be said that these sonatas were for 'piano and Mühlfeld' rather than 'piano and clarinet,' and it is almost a despairing hope that they may ever be heard again under similarly ideal conditions.

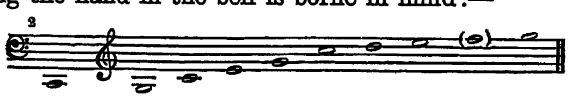
Without in the least wishing to place a check upon the scanty output of wind solo-music, the present author feels bound to advise the student of Chamber Music to use the clarinet in combination with strings or other wind instruments rather than with the piano, lest he should unwittingly do more to discredit it and lay bare its deficiencies than to reveal the beautiful qualities of which it is capable amidst more sympathetic surroundings.

Next to the flute and clarinet, the horn may be accounted the most useful wind instrument in Chamber Music. It is, indeed, the only brass instrument worth considering in this connection. Saint-Saëns, it is true, has used the trumpet in his Septet, Op. 67, but the effect is not good, the somewhat blatant character of the music itself affording the best proof of the unwisdom of its employment.[1]

The horn has a pure and tender tone (albeit somewhat mournful in character when blown softly) which blends admirably alike with strings and wood-wind. Its sustained notes have the power, as it were, of binding the other instruments together, giving a smoothness to the music scarcely obtainable in any other way. Horn tones can also be used as a foundation for the harmonic scheme, for they form a good rich bass, and no instrument is more effective for melodic solo-passages, provided they are well and suitably devised for it. It is, however, one of the most treacherous and unsafe of instruments if recklessly or carelessly treated, and some composers (even great composers) have written unwisely for it.

The instrument now in general use is equipped with valves, and is capable of playing every note of the chromatic scale. Old prejudices die hard, and opinions still differ as to the respective merits of the old 'hand horn' (which was only able to play in a natural way the notes of the 'harmonic series') and the valve horn of to-day. As all horn players have entirely discarded the former, such discussions are quite profitless, and the student may, without question, take full advantage of all the opportunities which the modern mechanism affords.

At the same time the essential character of the instrument is liable to be lost sight of, unless the series of notes which can be played without altering the length of the tubing or placing the hand in the bell is borne in mind:—



[1] There is also in existence a Septet for Trumpet, Two Flutes, and Strings, by Vincent D'Indy, Op. 24.

[2] Notes for the horn in the bass clef are written an octave lower than actually intended.

The study of chamber works written for the old horn will give a clear idea of its native peculiarities, and these should at least be remembered, in spite of the fact that modern improvements have enormously increased the scope and use of the instrument. Every note of the chromatic scale can be produced with clear and even tone on the present-day valve horn. Nevertheless, the old device of altering the pitch of the notes by inserting the fingers in the bell of the instrument (a necessity in the case of the hand horn when notes other than those printed above were required) can still be used for the special purpose of obtaining a peculiar tone not otherwise producible—though this tone is not so generally effective in Chamber Music as it is in the orchestra, and if used with emphasis it has a strongly metallic and somewhat bizarre character. 'Closed notes' (as they are called) will, therefore, not very often be desirable, but when required they may be indicated by the word "*bouchée*," or (as in Wagner's scores) by the sign + placed above the notes.

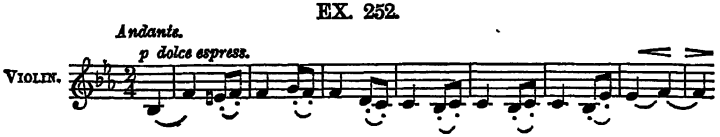
The horn, as the student who reads these pages will probably be aware, is also a 'transposing instrument,' though, unlike the clarinet, the parts are written in the key of C, and transpose, downwards, into the key of the horn for which they are intended. Some few modern composers have adopted what seems a wise procedure in attaching a key-signature to horn parts, but at the time of writing the custom is by no means general.

For good or ill it is extremely seldom that a horn player of the present day uses any other crook to his instrument than that which gives the key of F (transposing a perfect fifth lower), though in studying horn music one must make oneself well accustomed to the transpositions demanded when other crooks are attached, especially those in E and E flat, which are sometimes written for even nowadays, though when they are, the players, with calm wilfulness, disregard the composer's instructions and play everything on their favourite horn in F.

The library of Chamber Music in which the instrument participates is extensive. Mozart and Beethoven were fond of employing two horns in conjunction with strings. Mozart's

works in this form do not contain very enterpr[illegible]counted parts, for the instruments play chiefly holding notes.[1] It is, h[illegible]oven's Sextet for Strings and Two Horns, Op. 81, is, how[illegible]this well worth studying. The horns have here many exceedin[illegible]in difficult things, including rapid scale passages, to play. I[illegible] quite modern Chamber Music the horn has been little catered for, except in works where several wind instruments are employed, so that very few instances can be given of the special use of the variety with valves in prolonged solo passages.

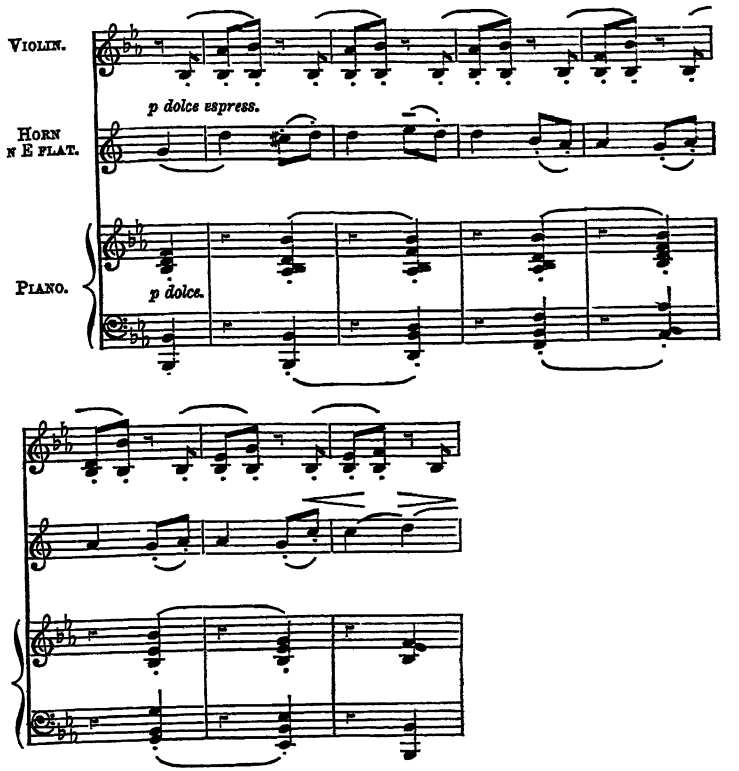
Perhaps the most interesting modern chamber work in which the horn has a predominating part is the Trio in E flat of Brahms (Op. 40), where it is used in association with violin and piano.[2] This seems an unpromising combination, and one in which a satisfactory balance would be hard to secure and maintain. All the more instructive is it, therefore, to observe with what rare skill and certainty the artistic proportion is preserved throughout. The subjects are clearly all chosen as much for their suitability for either violin or horn as for their intrinsic beauty. The theme with which the first movement opens,

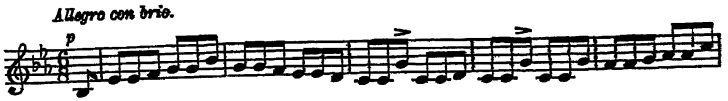
EX. 252.

leads one to expect the horn tone, although the wind instrument for the moment is silent. And then, when it enters, the violin

[1] In his Quintet in E flat for one violin, two violas, 'cello and horn, however, Mozart has written an extraordinary part for the wind instrument. The passages it contains are so incredibly difficult that it is not easy to believe that they were ever successfully surmounted by performers on the old hand horn.

[2] Despite the modernity of the music, a skilful horn-player could actually perform this work without using the valves—a striking evidence of Brahms's insight into the true character of horn music. Indeed the author has it on the authority of Mr. A. Borsdorf that Brahms used in many passages to insist upon the player producing certain notes by inserting the hand in the bell instead of using the pistons.

it once finds its fitting place as an interesting background to the solo:—

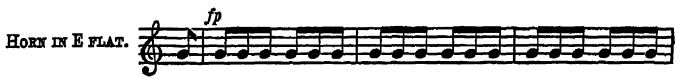
EX. 253.

In a similar way the chief subject of the Finale, appearing first on the violin, has an obvious horn flavour,—although the horn never plays more than two bars of it as it stands in its original form.

EX. 254.

At the same time this merry tune, so delightfully suggestive of the chase, contains the nucleus of almost all the developments in which the horn plays a prominent part, and

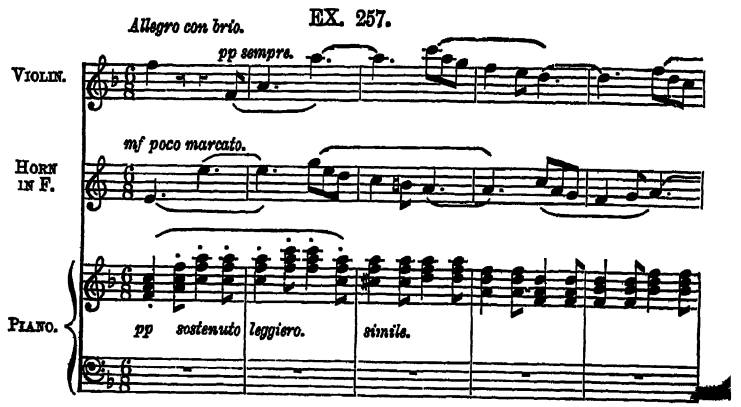
is certainly responsible for the invention of the characteristic phrase—

EX. 255.

and the repeated notes

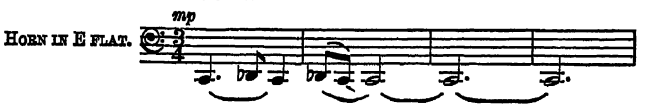
EX. 256.

which form such an immensely effective feature of the wind music in this work.

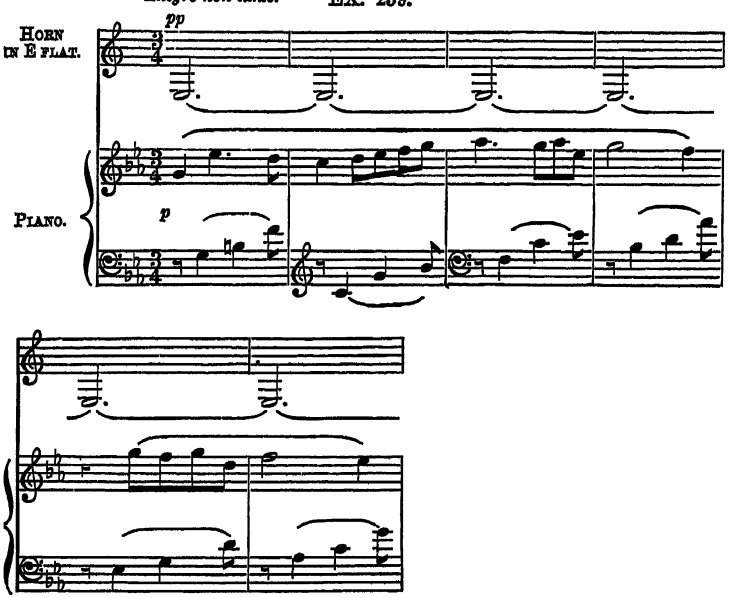
Amongst latter-day compositions in which prominence is given to the horn, a trio by Josef Holbrooke (Op. 28) may be mentioned, in which, as regards the instruments employed, the example of Brahms is followed. The music, however, is of less serious calibre, but there are many points of interest to note. Amongst these may be mentioned an episode in the first movement in which the horn plays a smooth solo, *mezzo-forte*, the violin echoing, *pianissimo*—in canon—and the piano completing the design by playing lightly throbbing chords. The device is sustained for some space, but it must suffice here to quote only the opening bars:—

EX. 257.

In the Finale of the same work the horn is muted to obtain a special effect in one of the themes. The circumstance

is altogether exceptional, though mutes are used often enough in orchestral music at the present day.

The value of the horn as a bass instrument has already been alluded to. In a Trio in C minor for Clarinet, Horn, and Piano, by Donald Francis Tovey (Op. 8), some extremely low notes are used, and the effect is very sonorous and grave. The following passage occurs in the first movement, at the beginning of an episode in which the clarinet also plays in its lowest register—the combination of deep tones being unusual:—

Moderato. EX. 258.

and, later in the work, we find the horn holding a pedal G, *pianissimo*, whilst the piano announces the subject of the Finale.

Allegro non tanto. EX. 259.

[1] See footnote to page 262. Being in the bass clef this passage sounds a minor third higher than written.

For further apt instances of shape and design in hor writing the reader may be referred to the examples on page 276, 282, 284, 288, 293 and 295, where in each case recog nition is apparent of its own particular characteristics, an where the marked differences in demeanour of its companion throw these characteristics into plainly discernible relief.

The only other instrument that need be dealt with in thi book is the bassoon, an important member of the wood-win family. Like the oboe, the bassoon has a double-reed, bu owing to its somewhat unscientific proportions it is les uniform in tone and less sure in intonation than other wood wind instruments, though it has a magnificent range and i capable of considerable dignity of expression. In Chambe Music it occupies a similar place amongst wind instruments t that held by the 'cello amongst the strings. The compas available is nearly the same, though it can accomplish a ton lower if needed, and it would be dangerous to write above the B flat three octaves higher than this lowest note.

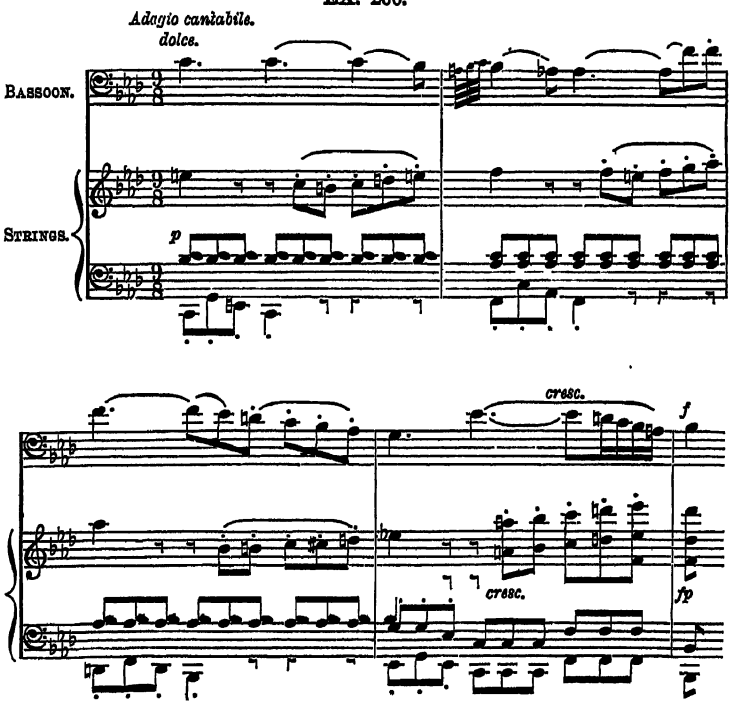
Like the 'cello, therefore, the bassoon is available for teno and baritone solos, and need by no means be regarded a merely a bass instrument. The notes above middle C have indeed some kinship in tone with those of the 'cello, though they are duller in quality, and there is generally some sense o effort apparent at their emission. The medium register, which may be said to extend for about an octave downwards from middle C, is powerful, but rather hollow and lacking in charm or colour. The notes of the lowest octave are rich and full, but, in solo passages, it is necessary to use the very deep tones warily lest they sound grotesque.

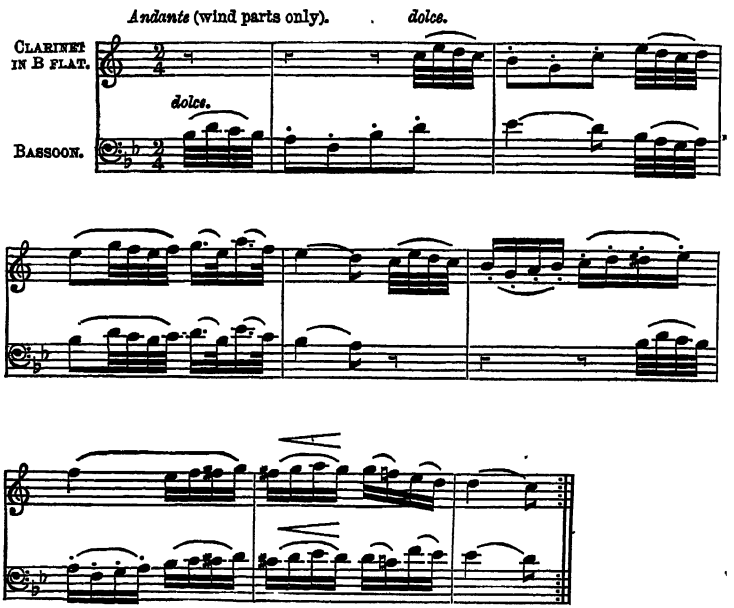
The bassoon, though really a species of bass oboe, combines very well with clarinets, and in certain parts of its compass has a tone bearing some resemblance to that of the horn. It can, therefore, be used effectively when desired for soft music of a sustained character. It is capable of considerable execution, being equally well adapted for *legato* or *staccato* passages, and, like the clarinet, it can jump from one register to another with ease and certainty. In bassoon solo music much use is

generally made of this agile power, but bassoon solo music is, with few exceptions, so entirely unworthy that it has debased the instrument, and caused it to be regarded by the multitude as a kind of musical buffoon from whom humour of a cheap and obvious type is expected to emanate.

The happiest instances of the use of the bassoon may be found in chamber works which employ other wind instruments, and especially in septets and octets where the strings also find a place. Like the oboe the tone of this instrument is in danger of becoming tiresome and monotonous if one is compelled to use it continuously in solo passages. An occasional *cantabile* melody in the tenor register may, however, afford a valuable and welcome touch of colour, and is especially effective when it can rely upon the strings for support.

There is a section in the Adagio of Beethoven's Septet, Op. 20, which forms an admirable object-lesson upon this point:—

EX. 260.

Nor need one go further afield in search of a good illustration of the bassoon in a more active mood, for in the third variation of the Andante of the same work there is an ideally characteristic passage, which not only displays the instrument at its very best, but shows how it may be utilised side by side with the clarinet in a companionable manner.

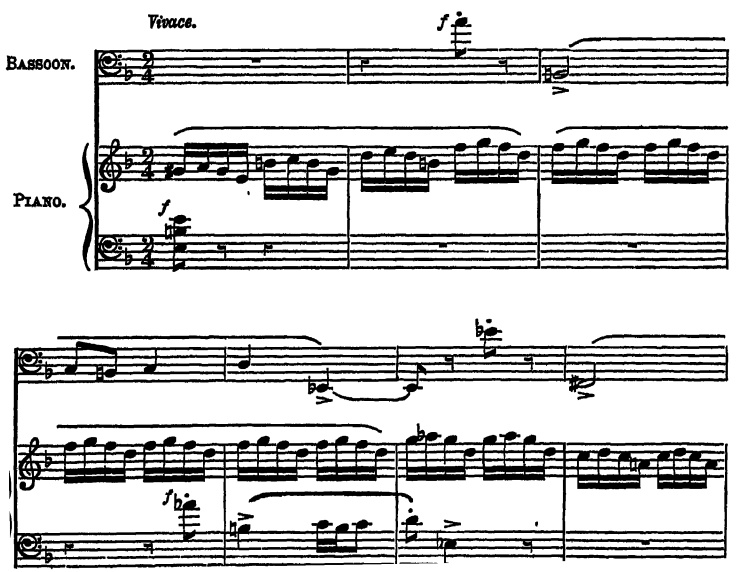
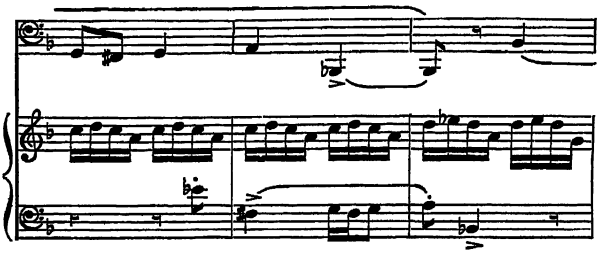
EX. 261.

From the limbo of neutral or worthless works for bassoon and piano one may rescue the delightful Sonata in F major by the late William Y. Hurlstone, which the publishers, as if ashamed, have issued as a sonata for 'cello and piano, with no indication of the composer's original intention, save the dedication to an eminent bassoon player, and a few stray low B flats which they have perhaps forgotten to erase!

As the work is in reality almost as ineffective on the stringed instrument as it is happily suited to its original exponent, the writing forms an apt and valuable lesson in the difference of treatment demanded. The powerful low notes of

the bassoon, for instance, do not enforce the necessity of toning down the piano part to slender proportions, a necessity which no composer of accompaniments to 'cello music can dare to ignore. On the other hand, the high notes, so telling on the 'cello, are somewhat weak and require most careful accompanying.

These points were all fully recognised by Hurlstone, and it seems at least somewhat unfair to his memory to publish the work, without comment, as a sonata for 'cello when it was most obviously never designed for performance upon that instrument.

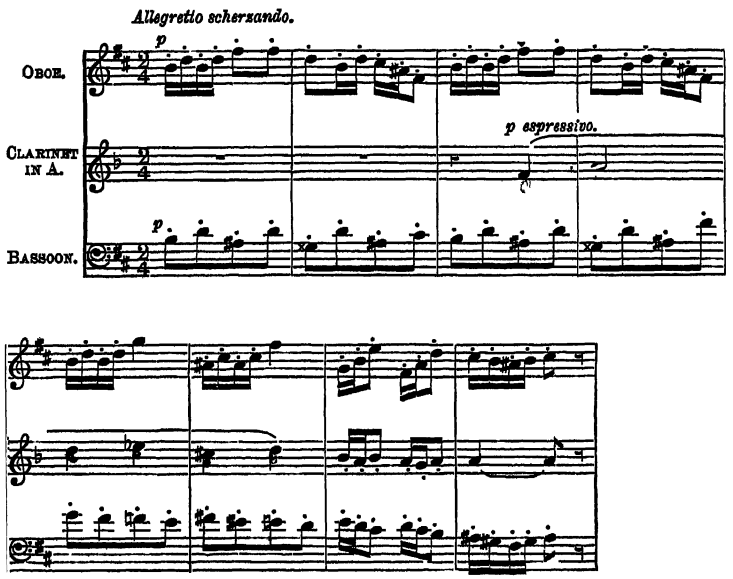
One brief quotation from the bright and vivacious Finale will suffice to show how admirably the situation is handled. This is a passage in which use is found for the wide skips to which allusion has been made, and it has, moreover, a genuine and delicate humour, as distinct from the mere clowning which does duty for that quality in the bassoon music of inferior writers. The piano, too, shares the interest, and the balance of the two forces is quite impeccable.

EX. 262.

Having commented upon the special characteristics and capabilities of the various wind instruments in general use in Chamber Music, it is now the fitting moment to consider some of the possible methods of combining their several tones together in ensemble writing. As has already been hinted, the difficulties to be met with are far greater than in the case of strings, where an approximate similarity of tone and technique can be counted upon, and part-writing of a polyphonic type may at most times be trusted to make its due effect.

There are doubtless many movements of string quartets which could quite easily be played by, say, a flute, an oboe, a clarinet, and a bassoon with scarcely the alteration of a single note, but good string-quartet music would be execrable wind music, and the blending of these four distinct parts would sound absurd, even if account were taken of the separate technical capabilities of each instrument, for the differences of strength, carrying power, and *timbre* would make hideous battle one with another, and there would be no sort of unity possible. If two clarinets or two oboes were combined with two bassoons, the problem would become easier of solution, and a four-part construction would not necessarily be incompatible with good balance; but a choice of instruments which involves the doubling of the same tone colour is not so generally adopted in Chamber Music, for the methods here demanded savour more of orchestral writing, where the members of the wood-wind group are almost invariably used in pairs.

It is not impossible, however, within a limited sphere, to obtain a charming effect from a trio of sufficiently evenly-matched wind instruments such as an oboe, a clarinet, and a

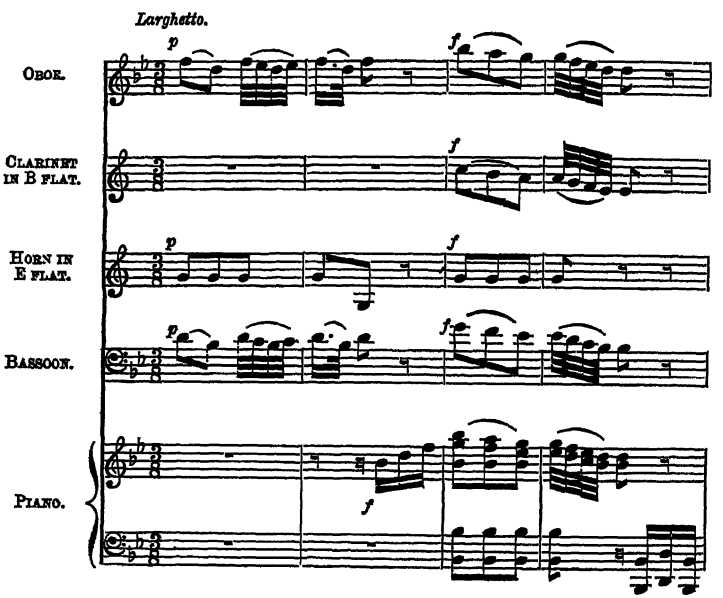
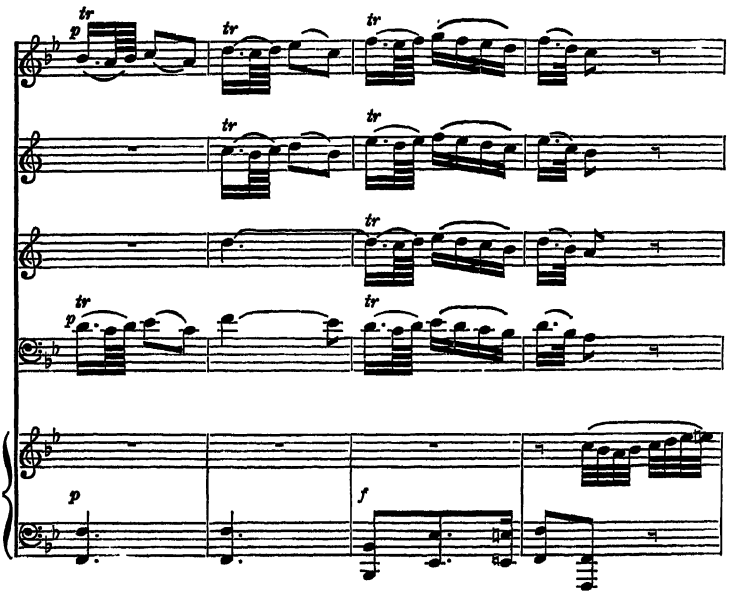
bassoon, the three-part basis being well adapted to show off, severally, the different values of each factor in the ensemble. In Flegier's Trio in B minor this very combination is treated with such a sure touch that the result is delightful. We hear in this passage from the 'Intermezzo,' for instance, the oboe in its playful mood, the bassoon on its most delicate *staccato* notes, and the clarinet lending its rich expressive tone to the more smoothly written middle voice which binds the whole together.

EX. 263.

Generally speaking, the tone of the oboe does not blend well with that of the clarinet, but the bassoon forms a quite satisfactory support for either, and if (as in the above extract) the composer contrives to make his outside parts satisfactory by themselves (as a melody and bass), and to use the third instrument to fill in the harmony with a separate line of sustained notes, or contrasting counterpoint, he may achieve

success in his ensemble. There is, of course, a danger in prolonging such a work to the point of monotony, for the resources are so limited, and the imperative need of providing breathing places for the players may also cause considerable trouble. But Flegier gives as much variety as possible, always considers the special aptitudes of the separate instruments, and shows due regard for the necessity of brevity in each of the four movements.

In the well-known quintets for wind and piano of Mozart and Beethoven the same three instruments are employed with the addition of a horn. The skill with which this difficult mixture of elements is blended together is in both instances quite astonishing—and particularly so in the case of Mozart's Quintet in E flat, from which two illustrations may be drawn.

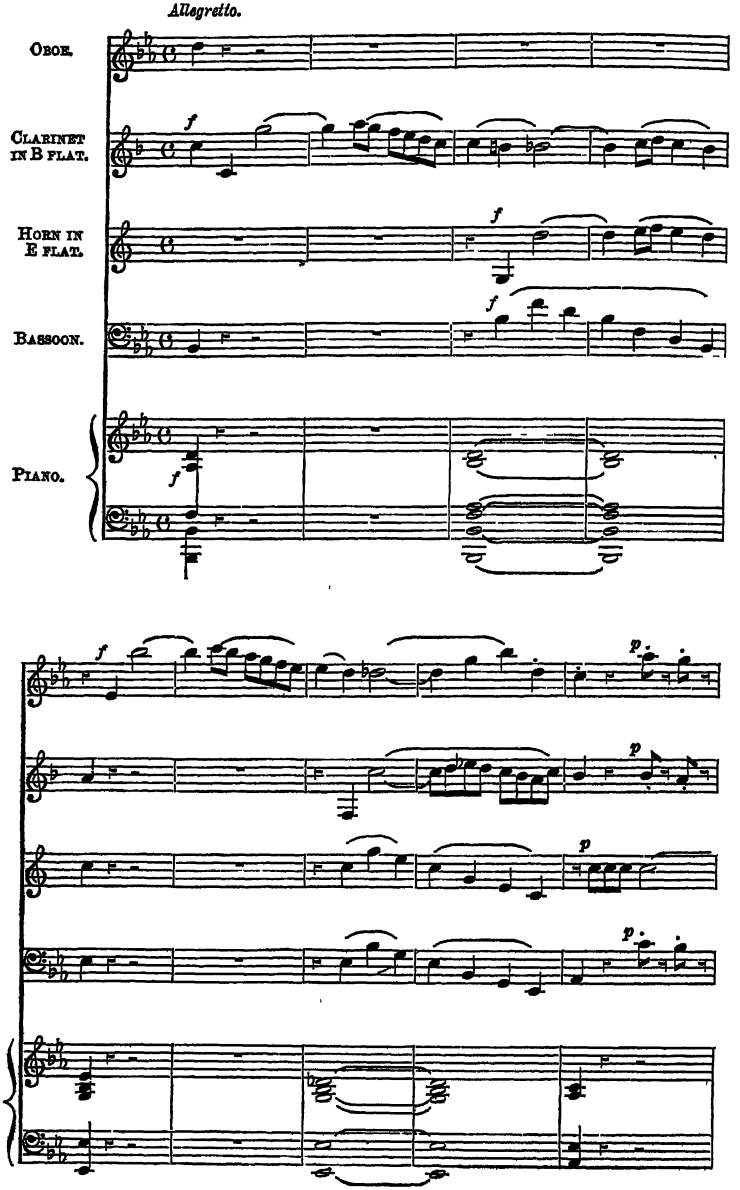
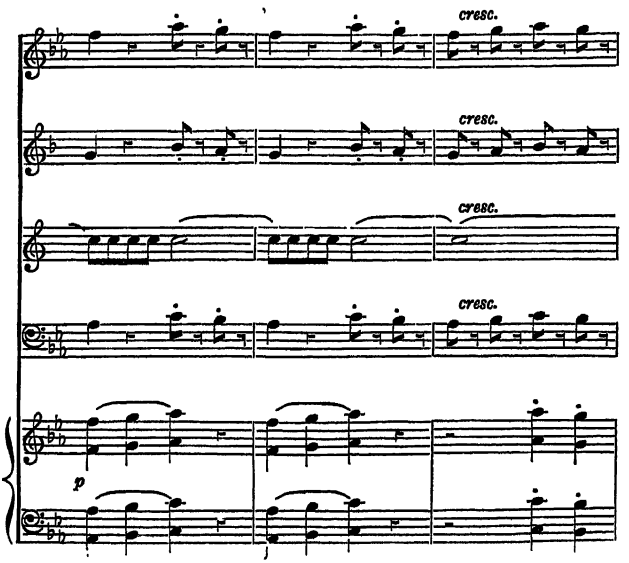
Let us analyse this passage, which is the opening phrase of the slow movement:—

EX. 264.

At the beginning of the melody the oboe and bassoon play softly together in tenths, and the horn provides a pedal bass. Then, at the *forte*, the clarinet enters to strengthen the oboe part at the octave below. The piano here lends force to the situation, and gives a firm bass for the rest of the eight bars.

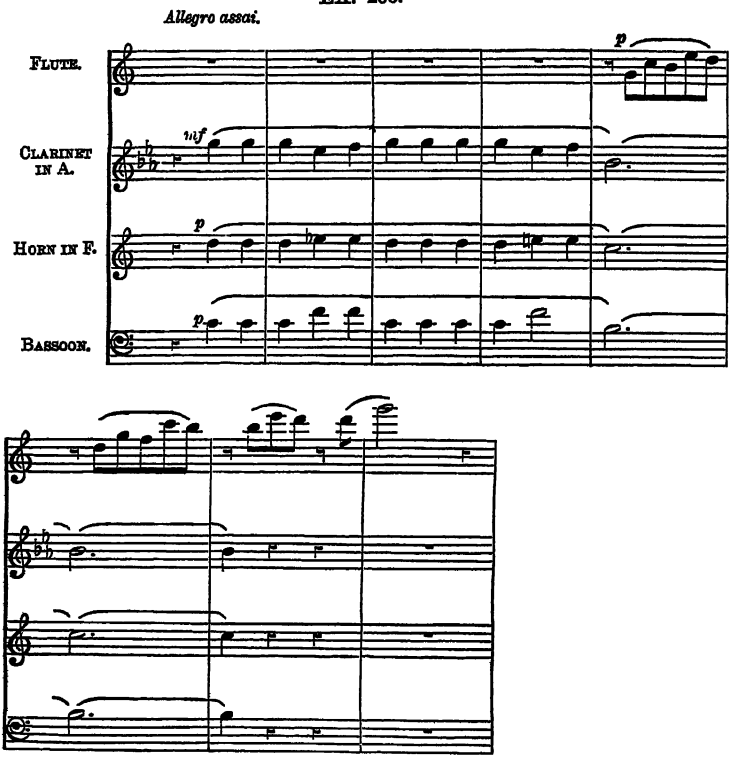
The manner in which the instruments are grouped in couples at the end should also be noted—oboe and horn in octaves, and clarinet and bassoon in octaves. A reference to the illustration on page 262 will show that, with one exception, all the horn notes in the last three bars of the above extract belong to the natural harmonic series. The phrase is effective, and quite easy to play on a hand horn with an E flat crook.

There is no four-part writing in the whole passage, and at no moment in its progress could a subordinate voice possibly become unduly prominent.

The second illustration is even more striking, and every detail teaches a lesson. It is taken from the final Rondo of the work:—

EX. 265.

Allegretto.
Oboe.
Clarinet in B flat.
Horn in E flat.
Bassoon.
Piano.
f
p

For the first eight bars the phrase which begins with a leap of a twelfth is in the foreground; clarinet, horn, and oboe each taking a share in bringing it into prominence. But the smooth arpeggio figure allotted first to the bassoon, and later to the bassoon and horn in octaves, has a graceful shape which contributes greatly to the general effect, whilst the sustained chords on the piano, though unobtrusive, have their own importance. The last four bars are splendidly devised. The three well-defined factors are the *staccato* quavers on the wood-wind, the slurred crotchets of the piano octaves (which move in a contrary direction), and the rhythmically repeated E flats on the horn, which bind the whole passage together. It is instructive to notice that the staccato quavers are arranged so that the clarinet and bassoon play in sixths and the oboe adds colour by doubling the clarinet in the higher octave. No better example of the application of the oft-commended three-part construction could be given than this delightful specimen of the pure art of Mozart, whose delicate fancy seems ever to be guided and tempered by unerring judgment, the whole process appearing unconscious, inevitable, consentaneous.

Amongst composers of later date who have written with some success for wind and piano is Rubinstein, who in his Quintet (Op. 55) has chosen to utilise the flute in place of the oboe. He does not hesitate, when occasion demands, to use the clarinet, horn, and bassoon in ordinary three-part fashion, but wisely recognises that the flute is separate from these, and can seldom form the top voice of four-part harmony unless it is written for very high. More often it has some decorations of its own to add to the design, as in this passage from the Scherzo, of which the wind parts only are here given:—

EX. 266.

The flute is, of course, quite clearly heard above the held chord, for it plays in a telling part of its register. One may

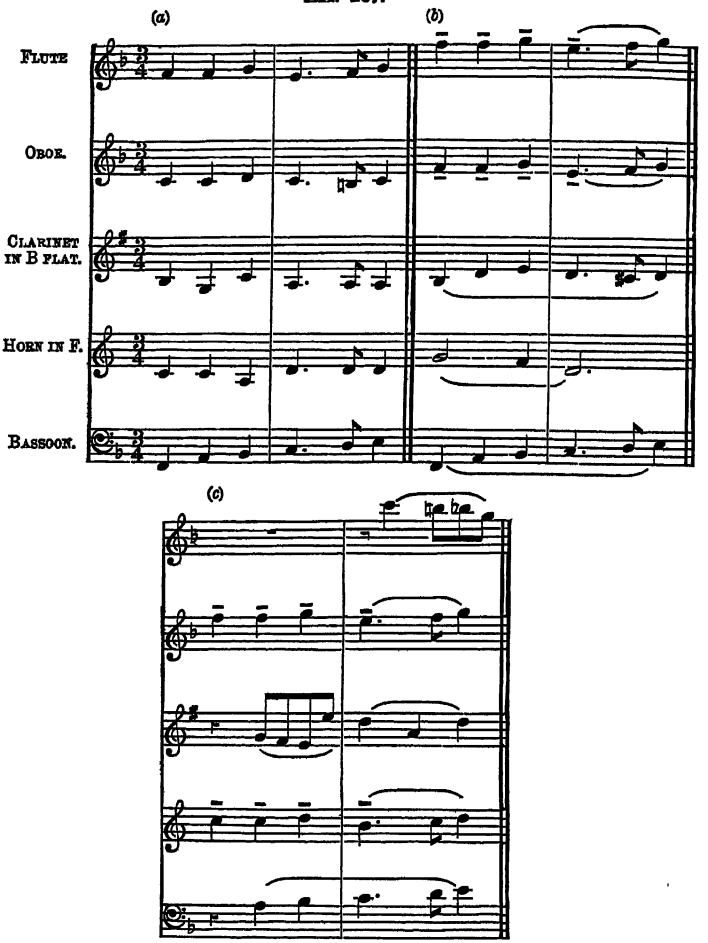
note also that the bassoon is playing the upper notes of its compass which blend well with the horn tones, and also that the clarinet part is marked *mf* whilst the bassoon and horn play *piano*. In writing for wind in combination different markings of this kind may be made to help towards the obtaining of a proper balance, though they will not save a badly distributed score. In the far more skilfully worked distributions of Mozart and Beethoven, the values are so truthfully understood and gauged that such devices are unnecessary, and practically never brought into play.

For another and far easier method of surmounting (or perhaps escaping) difficulties the student may consult the charming caprice on Danish and Russian themes by Saint-Saëns. This is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, and piano, and consists for the most part of solo-writing, the wind instruments taking turns in displaying their qualities. Very little actual use is made of the three in combination, except towards the end, where the melodies are given very much in unison (or octaves) and in dialogue passages loosely strung together, the piano accompanying. It forms, nevertheless, a fine lesson in the art of lightening one's texture, and in delicacy of treatment. The piano is most daintily provided for, and, if the interest of the music it plays is slender, there is a certain kind of superficial charm in the sparkling accompaniment which saves the work from any suspicion of dullness.

When flute, oboe, clarinet, horn, and bassoon are used by themselves, without support from keyboard or strings, some fresh exigencies present themselves, and the composer who can manage to construct a successful and judiciously balanced work for this quintet combination may be said to have mastered the most difficult of all problems in Chamber Music. One may assert without hesitation that ordinary five-part harmony for mixed wind instruments can never, under any circumstances, be other than unpracticable and disastrously ineffective.

In order to show how hopeless such a procedure would be, the author has ventured to arrange the first two bars of the National Anthem in this fashion, and to set alongside his

illustration two variants of the same in which an attempt has been made to amend the errors:—

EX. 267.

At (*a*) may be seen an ordinary dull and blameless piece of 'harmony-exercise' writing in five parts, which would sound perfectly smooth and well-balanced if sung by a choir of mixed voices with the third and fourth lines allotted to the tenors, *divisi*. But what would be the effect of this if played as

arranged above? The melody would probably not be heard at all, for the flute is playing quite weak notes, whilst the oboe and clarinet emit strongly coloured sounds, the one nasal and impossible to subdue, the other rich, deep, and full-toned. And not only would there be no tonal balance achieved, but the fact that all the instruments play their notes without slurs and in the same rhythm would further tend to obscure the issue and result in mere 'puffiness' and noise.

If the parts were arranged as at (*b*) a vastly different effect would be secured. The melody would then be quite prominent, for the flute not only plays in a more suitable part of its compass, but its notes are doubled by the oboe an octave below. The clarinet and bassoon move in a satisfactory two-part arrangement: the horn has slower notes which are far more suited to it, and fulfil the necessary functions of filling-in and holding smoothly together: the differences in the slurring make themselves clearly felt, and aid towards a more natural statement of the musical phrase.

At (*c*) a more fanciful arrangement is indulged in. Without pretending to be an apt rendering of this particular tune, it provides the flute and clarinet with passages more obviously suited to them, and allows the melody to be given in the best part of the oboe's compass, doubled by the horn in the lower octave. The bassoon notes, too, are sweeter and less assertive, and the rests serve to lighten the fabric. As regards clearness of melody and balance there is little to choose between these last two arrangements, but the effect in each case is totally different, both in colouring and style.

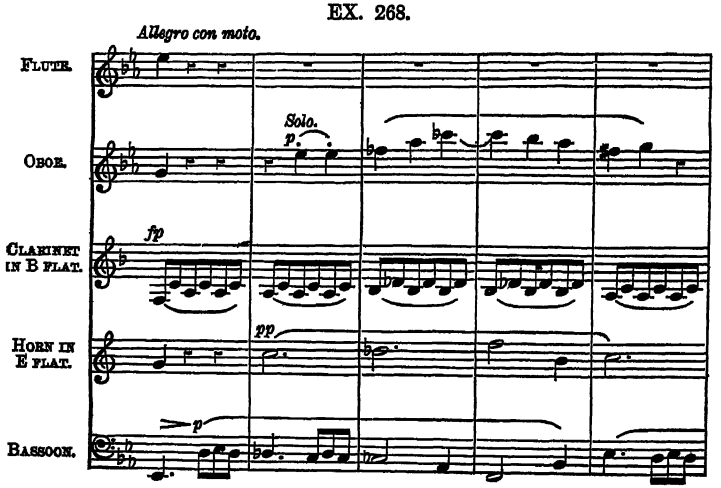
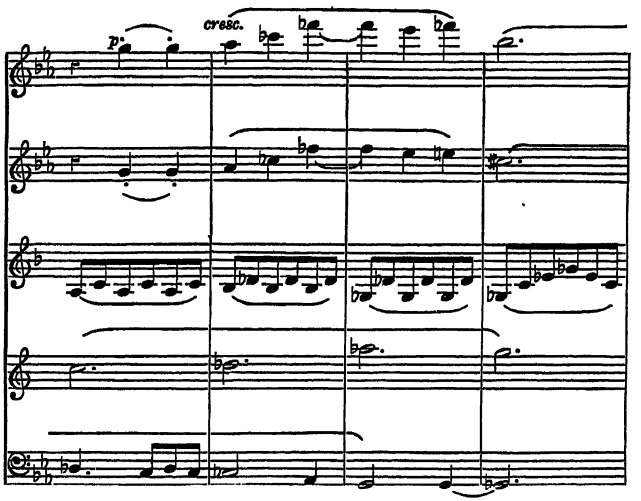
If the student is anxious to exercise his skill in writing for a quintet of wind instruments, he may be advised, before attempting a prolonged composition, to write the whole of such a tune as the National Anthem for wind alone, trying different experiments in part-distribution, cross-phrasings, etc. He might, for instance, commence as at (*b*) and as at (*c*), and continue each example, trying to maintain the special constructive features and manner of the opening throughout, whilst never forgetting the value of intelligent punctuation, and the necessity for detailed markings regarding phrasing and accent.

He will probably find the occupation a most fascinating one, and, if he is quick and of an inventive turn of mind, he will soon discover that the opportunities of ringing the changes and indulging in quaint contrasts are greater and far more frequent than might at first be supposed.

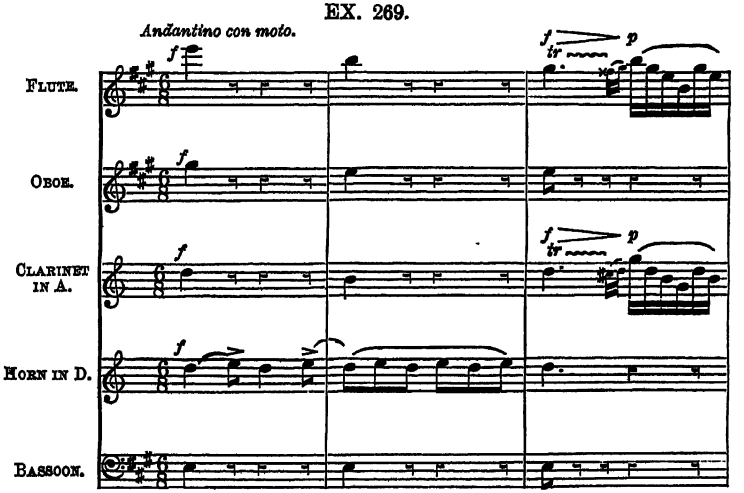
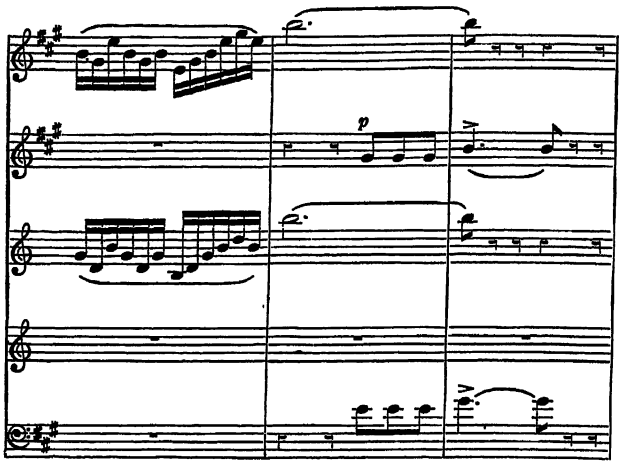
It would be a vain task to attempt to tabulate even the most generally useful devices available, and the three final illustrations of this chapter are set forth for inspection merely in the hope that the suggestive methods exemplified in each case may prove helpful to writers who feel timid in embarking upon a task containing so many pitfalls.

The skill and confidence displayed in the Quintet in E flat for wind alone, by Fritz Kauffmann (Op. 40), must, at all events, command some measure of admiration. In the extract from the first movement, given below, the oboe may be seen standing out prominently as a solo instrument, reinforced after four bars by the clear high notes of the flute.

The murmuring broken-chord figures given to the clarinet—too widely separated from the main material to obscure it—make an excellent and unobtrusive middle substance, while the smoothly curved bassoon part and the slow *pianissimo* horn notes are alike interesting and quite satisfactory as support.

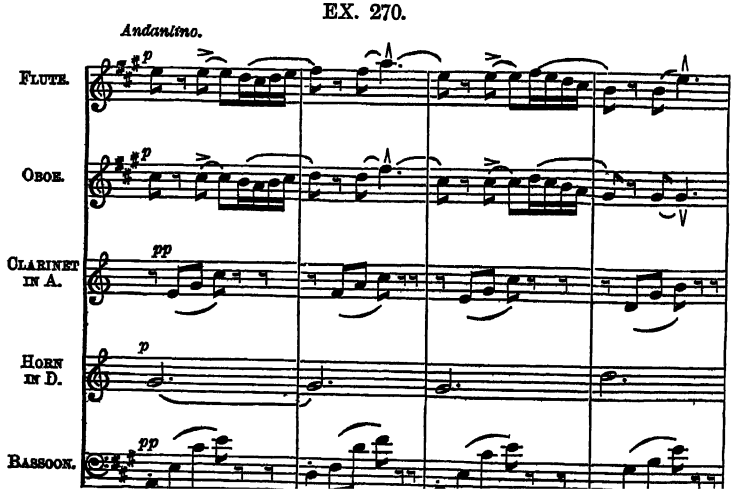
EX. 268.



More fragile in build, but none the less deft and sure in workmanship, is a charming "Aubade," by Adrien Barthe, in which the flute has a very brilliant and agile part. At the very beginning one must be struck with the simplicity of the design and the grateful nature of the writing, and may note how much of the effect is due to the plentiful use of rests.

EX. 269.



The flute and clarinet arpeggios are delightful: so is the entry of the oboe and bassoon in tenths at the fifth bar, and, given neat clear playing, the effect of the whole passage would be unmistakably arresting.

Later in the work there are some clever instances of the use of melody and accompaniment, one of which may be briefly noted, since this is a fresh problem which might present great difficulty to a beginner.

EX. 270.

The music speaks for itself. One may point out, however, the special usefulness of the holding notes of the horn, which prevent the clarinet and bassoon figures of accompaniment from sounding disjointed and scrappy, and the careful accentuation of the flute and oboe duet, upon which (as much as upon the actual notes of the melody itself) the bright effect of the whole episode depends.

It is much to be regretted that wind ensemble music is out of fashion. If it cannot be denied that a programme consisting entirely of wind music engenders a certain feeling of monotony, the unwonted neglect by the givers of chamber concerts of so much that is beautiful is to be deplored. In earlier days things were different, and some of us may recall how, in his quaint chronicles, Samuel Pepys testifies to the delights of the sweet 'wind musick' which he heard at a performance of "The Virgin Martyr." "It ravished me," he wrote, "and did wrap up my soul . . . it made me really sick, just as I had formerly been when in love with my wife."

The recent attempts that have been made to revive interest in the subject ~~in this country~~ have not met with the success they deserve, which casts the blame conveniently upon that long-suffering target for abuse, the British public. But, if demand creates supply, supply—at least in artistic matters—has been known to stimulate demand. So that if the distinguished composers of the hour were to turn their attention more frequently to the writing of such works as those reviewed in this chapter, a pleasant fashion of ancient days might see wholesome revival, and an unfamiliar luxury take its deserved place amongst the quieter joys of life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LARGER COMBINATIONS.

Retrospections and Prospects of Development.

THE task of critically surveying Chamber Music in its most usual forms is now all but accomplished, though something yet remains to be said regarding the management of the larger combinations before the scheme of this treatise can be considered sufficiently comprehensive.

A few general observations, supplemented by some illustrations of an exemplary description, will suffice. If the composer essays to combine the various varieties of wind instruments, using a pair of each kind, the methods he will adopt will be precisely those which are deemed suitable for orchestral music, and he may be referred to the many existing text-books upon instrumentation for information and advice. It may be said, in general, that the more separate forces one gathers together, the more indistinct becomes the border-line which divides what is truly adapted for the chamber from what is foreign to it in spirit. There are certain works, however, such as the Septet of Beethoven (Op. 20) and the Octet of Schubert (Op. 166), which remain tolerably faithful to the principles so frequently enunciated in these pages, inasmuch as they do not depend for their success upon any extensive doubling of parts, and allow of a delicate interplay of ideas which might be lost or obscured in a large concert hall. For the satisfactory rendering of each of these works a company of accomplished solo players is needed, who shall play into each other's hands, and give and take, much as the performers of a string-quartet are accustomed to do.

At the same time, when wind and strings are combined in this way they sound like a miniature orchestra, and many of the effects which are produced on a larger scale in orchestral writing may be drawn upon to a considerable extent in the conception and general setting-out of a septet or octet. The style of writing for the strings, for instance, is, as a rule, far less polyphonic and complex than in ordinary chamber works, and passages in the nature of mere accompaniment are more readily admissible; wind and strings may also be used occasionally in one mass together, particularly in the 'tuttis,' where broad outlines are frequently demanded. At the same time the processes adopted, however similar, can never be quite identical. It is absolutely essential to remember that the tone produced by four or five string players is, in quality and body, very unlike that attained by a large concourse of performers in a stringed orchestra, and the composer who forgets this will not only perpetrate bad Chamber Music, but music which is top-heavy and ill-proportioned, and therefore useless for all practical purposes, though it may look very pretty on paper.

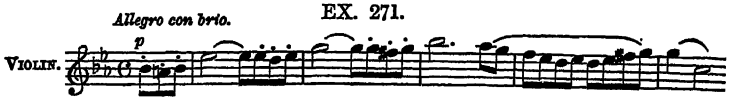
The practice of adding a piano part to these large combinations of instruments can scarcely be recommended. One may recall that writers such as Hummel, Spohr, Kalkbrenner, Moscheles, and Onslow wrote septets in which the piano participated, and that these works were all famous in their day, when the vogue of artificial and 'flowery' music was at its height. The fact is that the piano does not fall very easily into any clearly defined place in the scheme of such work if it is serious and important in intention, being either worse than useless when tending to merely thicken and muddle the total effect, or else irritatingly predominant beyond its deserts.

According to hoary tradition, such compositions as septets and octets are generally vastly longer than chamber works in which fewer performers are engaged. The famous examples of Beethoven and Schubert have each six movements, and each contains a long set of variations, and a Minuet in addition to a Scherzo. Perhaps it was felt that if the trouble was taken to get so many accomplished performers together it was well to make the most of them, but it is hard to see why the duration

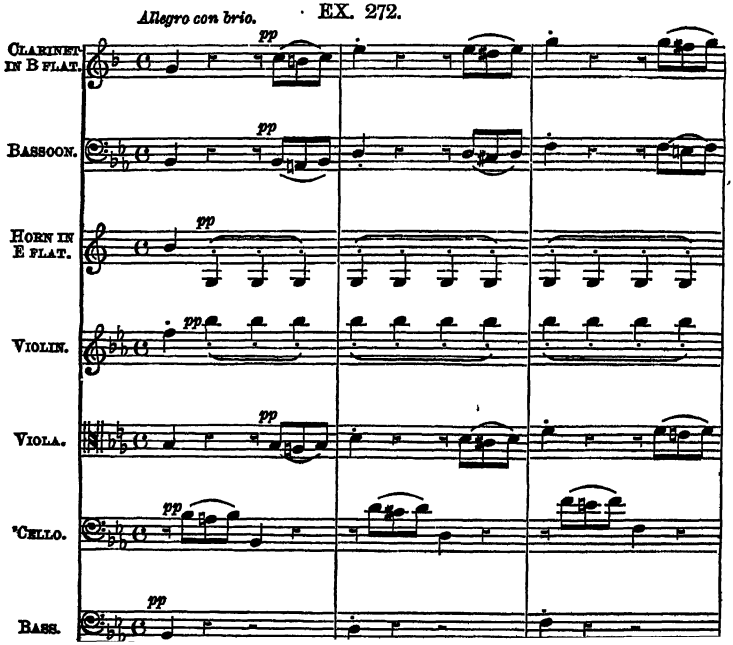
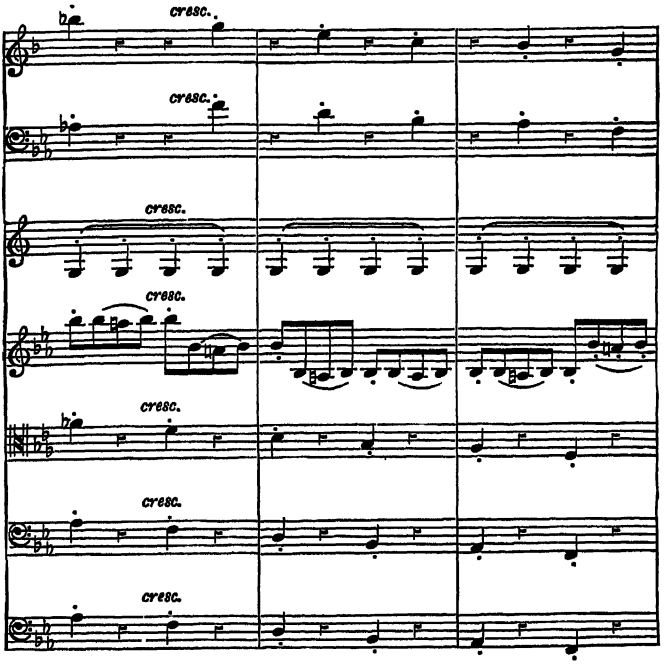
of any chamber work should be made to exceed that of an average symphony, and in modern times there is a decided tendency to get away from length of any kind (even the "heavenly" variety associated with Schubert), and it would be unwise for a composer of to-day to follow the example of these two works in this particular direction.

Nevertheless, in all other respects, better models could not be found for the student who is ambitious to excel in works of this calibre. Take Beethoven's Septet, for instance. If we examine only one of the developments of the principal subject of the first movement,

EX. 271.

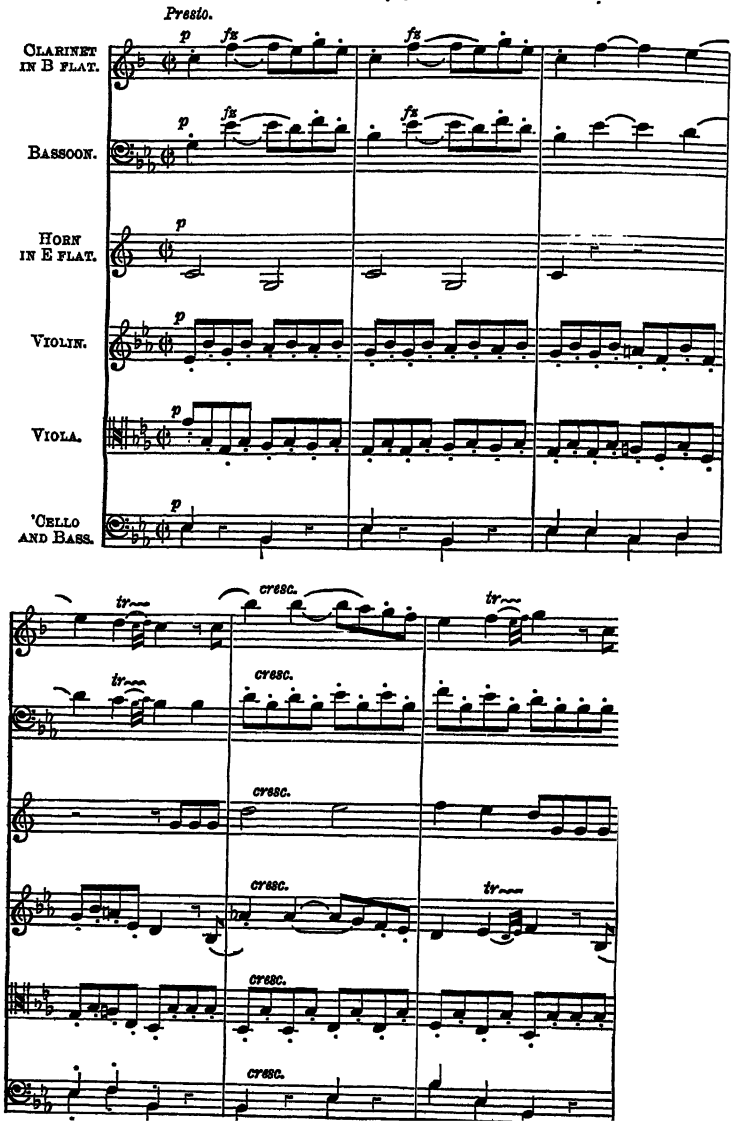


we shall find immediately a true understanding of the delicate adjustment of the instruments in a passage which is decidedly orchestral in manner without being in the least so in technique.

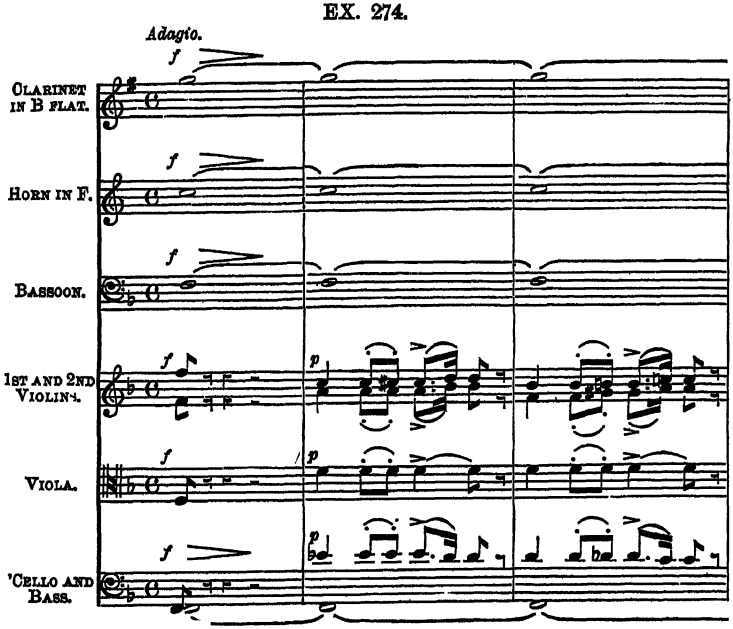
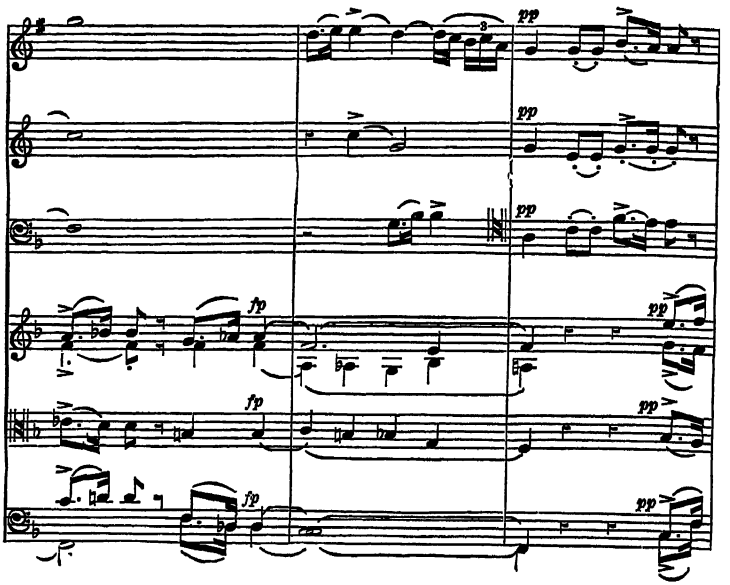
EX. 272.

An examination of this will show how chamber scoring may differ from orchestral scoring in a *pianissimo* 'tutti.' The persistent B flat of the horn and the doubling of this two octaves higher on the violin are dominant features of the page, and one may note (in the playful use of the first four notes of the original subject) how the viola adds the middle octave to the figures of the clarinet and bassoon, which play two octaves apart. The utilisation of the wind on the unaccented beats against the strings on the accents (in the last three bars) is, of course, a familiar device in orchestral work, but the application of it as it stands here is very refined and dainty. In short, the orchestra is suggested without any attempt at actual imitation.

In the Finale of the same work, when the wood-wind instruments take the bright boyish tune which forms the main theme from the hands of the violinist, we may see the string players employed for a space as accompanists, violin and viola playing *staccato* quavers an octave apart, and the 'cello and

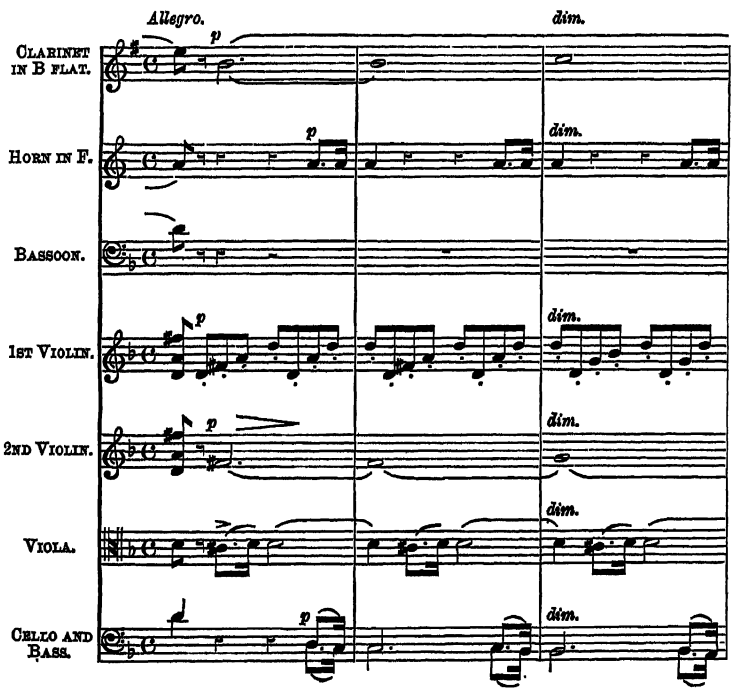
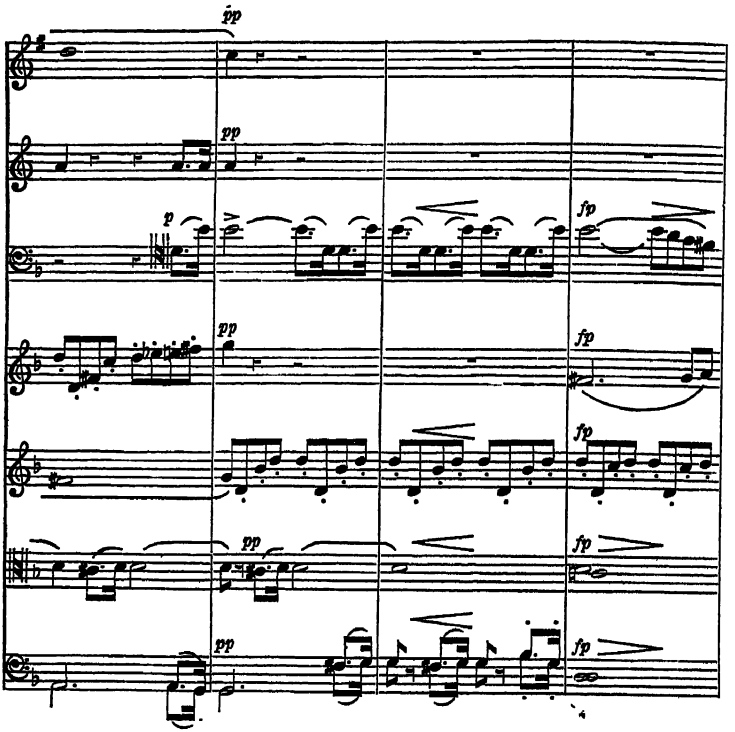
double-bass (helped by the horn in longer notes) giving the emphasis necessary to the lilt of the music.

EX. 273.

After four bars one may observe that the violin takes up the task of doubling the clarinet melody in place of the bassoon, and the latter transfers its energies to a continuation of the staccato accompaniment. At the same point the horn part compels a measure of the listener's attention without obstructing the flow of the chief melody, which remains clearly paramount throughout.

Passing to the octet of Schubert, a work in every way more mature and advanced, one may first note the greatly increased importance of the string element caused by the addition of a second violin to the score. In the opening bars of the introductory Adagio the held notes for the three wind instruments correspond to a sustained unison for the whole of the wind in an orchestral score, and balance with the quintet in the same way that the complete wind-band might do with a large body of strings. The effect of the low pedal note of the double-bass, occupying an isolated position two octaves below the rest, should also be mentally realised.

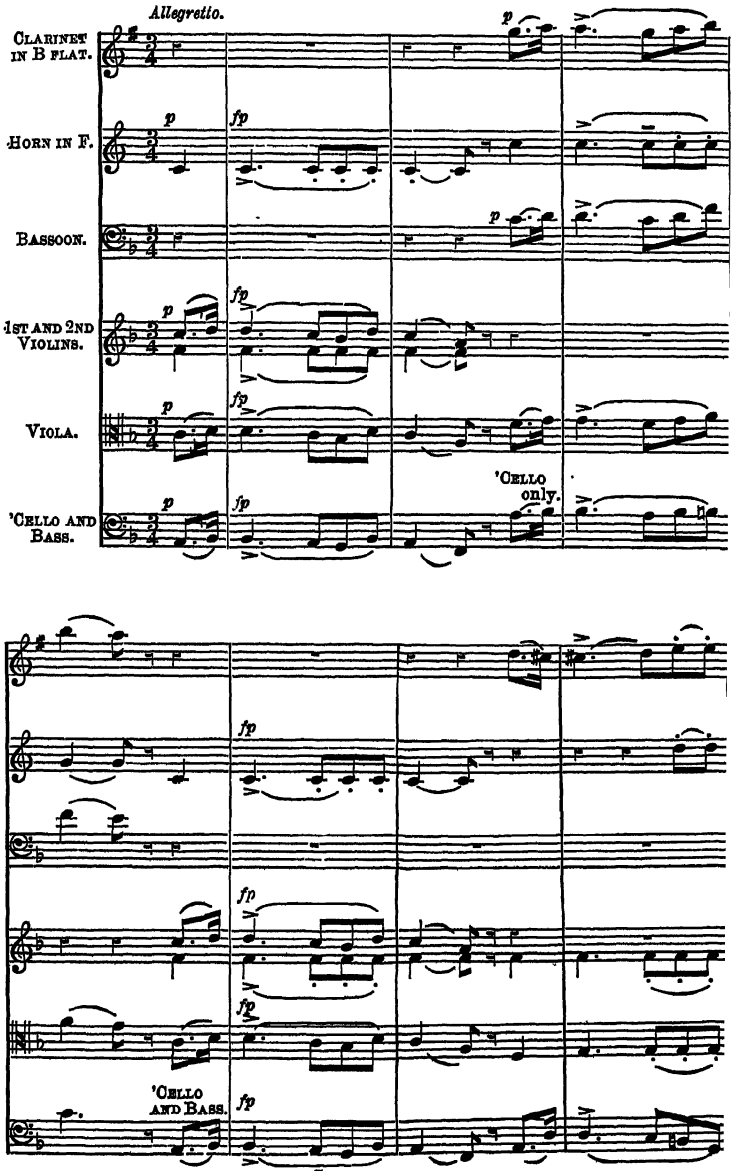
EX. 274.

This eminently symphonic scheme is fully maintained when the almost awesome solemnity of the Adagio gives place to a forcible Allegro, for which, by means of rhythmic anticipatory figures, one has been inwardly prepared. The score should first be enjoyed with ears alone, and then studied closely, for it is full of most rare beauty, and the flashes of Schubert's inspiration are so continuous that there are no moments where the music seems other than intensely and luminously alive. It would be idle to set down in black and white, as examples of mere skill, passages which obviously owe everything to their 'first fine careless rapture,' but where the impulse is recaptured in repetitions which are far more than mere duplications, the mastery which holds the reins of fancy may yield valuable secrets to those who temper admiration with a not unnatural studious inquisitiveness. If we can bring the cool, calm reflection of the study chair to the brief episode printed on the next two pages, we shall at least learn some of the lessons that a great master alone can teach.

It is a marvellous passage. There is not a note misplaced, and the numerous separate details which combine to produce the total effect are in every instance indispensable to the design. Viewed as a whole, the first four bars, with their *diminuendo*, are planned to lead up to an especially beautiful entry of an important subject on the bassoon. But, from the merely technical aspect, the way in which every instrument is fitted with what suits it, the perfect equilibrium of the part-writing, the variety of motion, the use of rhythmic figures on the viola and horn and in the descending bass, and the coupling of the clarinet and second violin with holding chords—these are the things which set one marvelling at the patient, practical skill which, when it guides the hand of genius, can lend so much additional value to work already vivid with impulse and inspiration.

EX. 275.

One final quotation will serve to show how direct contrasts of tone can be well achieved in an octet by means of wind answering strings in two separate groups. The bars chosen are those which open the Minuet, and sound so strong and forcible after the easy grace of the Andante con Variazioni which immediately precedes them.

Here it is quite evident that had Schubert had two additional wind instruments at his command he would have disposed his parts somewhat differently. But the contrast is secured without difficulty, for the viola and 'cello, which assist in completing the harmony of the answering phrase, supply tones which blend well with the wind, and the balance is in no sense upset.

EX. 276.


Allegretto.
Clarinet in B flat.
Horn in F.
Bassoon.
1st and 2nd Violins.
Viola.
'Cello and Bass.
'Cello only.
'Cello and Bass.

The temptation to quote further from a masterpiece which can teach so much must be resisted, lest the attention devoted to this branch of composition should seem disproportionate to its importance as Chamber Music.

What Schubert has done so superbly is little likely to be done again. In these days the orchestra is the field for those whose chief skill is for colour designs, and it must be a large and imposing one if it is to give effect to the modern love of sweeping and impetuous sound. The 'Chamber Orchestra' will attract less and less, for those who, tired of excessive energy and bustle, are attracted to retreat into a haven of musical peace will find more true refreshment in the quieter forms of trio, quartet, or quintet than in any combinations that may faintly suggest the tumult from which escape is sought.

After surveying the subject from so many standpoints, both broad and minute, one is tempted to shirk anything in the nature of a formal summing-up. Yet there remains, in concluding a work abounding in so much detailed criticism as the present volume, a certain fear lest some of the larger and more elemental aspects of the subject may, at times, have fallen in danger of being obscured. A treatise of this kind may, therefore, need a special summing-up, the function of which is not to reiterate details, but to gather the chief ideas together, as it were, into one focus, so that the reader may be prevented from seeing things in false perspective, and carrying off disproportionate or distorted impressions. To the objection that small details are of small importance there is an historical answer—small details make perfection, and perfection is of *great* importance. At the same time such details must fall into their places, and one must keep constantly in remembrance the big main purpose to which they contribute.

However great the natural talent of a composer may be, he will fail in producing truly interesting Chamber Music unless he has acquired the power of developing his themes. A composer such as Grieg, for instance, who was almost impotent in this respect, was not, with all his rare gifts, a successful

composer of full-fledged chamber works, though he excelled as a writer of airy trifles, and showed picturesque imagination in his fine Pianoforte Concerto and in a certain type of orchestral composition. On the other hand, his contemporary Brahms, the whole trend of whose ideas lay in the direction of the thoughtful and intellectual phases of art, was one of the greatest writers of Chamber Music the world has ever seen.

If this proves anything, it proves that an underlying seriousness of disposition is almost an essential to the Chamber Music writer. It is not denied that light music is occasionally quite legitimate in this branch of art, but there can be no exhibition of actual levity or frivolity without creating a sense exactly opposite to that which is intended by the composer—a sense of mental suffering in those listeners who understand the dignity of Chamber Music, and come in the right frame of mind to hear it. Moreover, any indulgence in affectation, any insincerity or pose, is immediately detected at a chamber concert and instinctively condemned, whilst it may pass muster, and even create a certain measure of interest, when decked out with some of the flamboyant colourings that the orchestra affords.

It cannot be denied that most of the advice offered to the would-be composer in this book has a general and not a special application. The author has on different occasions, and in different connections, condemned certain technical devices as unsuitable to Chamber Music; but the alert musician will, if he chooses, easily be able to confront him with instances of the successful use of these same unsuitable devices by great composers.

One must never forget that there are exceptions to be reckoned with at all times, and one cannot even claim that they always 'prove the rule': more often, indeed, they prove the total inadequacy of rules in any sphere where the play of imagination and personal emotion occupies considerable sway. Such rules as may be deemed useful to a beginner must be deduced from great works of art of the past as a whole. But many great works of art, particularly those of our own day, are incapable of analysis, and that is why rules can be, at

best, only partial guides, and in almost every instance a little behind the times.

Still one builds upon what is gone before, upon what is firmly established and universally sure, in order that one may not build upon sand. No prescriptions can be made out for the things which count most of all, even if a pupil can be taught, to a certain extent, how to avoid writing passages which do not sound well.

After all, as Mr. R. H. Walthew says in one of his admirable lectures, "in chamber music it is not only the sound of the music that is important; equally so is the primal energy of idea of which the played work can be but an incomplete expression." And this very primal energy of idea is exactly what it is impossible to analyse or teach.

It is one of the mysteries of art that "one man will write a piece of music accurately balanced, elaborately developed, and quite good in every way so far as we can see, and yet his work will leave us utterly unmoved; whereas another man with a few simple, and what would seem obvious, musical ideas will arrest our attention at once."

Again, stress has herein been laid upon the unsuitability of making use of chamber-music forms for the purpose of expressing definite pictorial episodes, and there too the construction placed upon such advice may easily be too narrow. One condemns the adoption of a "programme" only in a certain way. Of course every idea is dependent upon outward circumstances, and even the strictest abstract music is, in a manner, non-musical. Abstract music in the sense of music standing apart from "humanity, its life and its aspirations" is inconceivable. If Chamber Music be the outcome of mundane ideas, and is expressed in a suitable form, nobody can quarrel with it; but if it be an attempt to re-create those ideas in the mind of every listener, it is attempting something unattainable, and the mere struggle to express things in such an obvious way that every listener shall comprehend them in a concrete sense will at once debase or destroy the language-function of music, which is a quite separate language-function to that of literature, or that of the pictorial and plastic arts.

The present writer would be the last to affirm that Chamber Music should be regarded as unprogressive, or that the tendencies of the most modern species of symphonic writing may not exercise great sway and influence, indirectly, in other branches of musical work. There are no absolute barriers. But the art of the painter of small water-colours is different from that of the painter of great historical or didactic canvases. If the composer of a quartet feels, as he most assuredly will, that his four strings cannot give the same vivid impression of tangible things that the full orchestra can be made to convey, it will be better, not only for him but for the honour and dignity of quartet literature, if he will transfer his energies to a more expansive region.

Chamber Music offers a wide field for the idealist, and for the composer whose emotions are controlled by intellect, but a far narrower one for the worshipper of merely sensuous beauty, and for the writer whose passionate nature cannot easily be curbed or restrained. The fact that certain composers of the ultra-emotional school have undoubtedly created a few permanent and living chamber works in no way alters the truth of this very sound generalisation. At most it proves that there is scope for a musical genius of any stamp, even in the sphere least likely to afford a full realisation of his art.

We should remember also the peculiar intimacy and the magnetic influence of fine music written for only a few picked performers. Chamber Music gives greater intellectual pleasure to executants than any other kind. We write it as much for the players' enjoyment as for the satisfaction of the listeners. And this enjoyment can be, and is, communicated to the hearers, who participate in a remarkable degree in that peculiar pleasure which the interpreters derive from their task. Performers are generally the best judges of music and the most reliable critics. If a work has merit they will, almost invariably, be the first to recognise it, and their sympathy and understanding will be one of the greatest helps a composer can ever know.

Finally, it is greatly to be hoped that the predomination of quite old-fashioned examples amongst the musical illustrations

of this book will not be taken as an indication that the author desires to promulgate reactionary ideas in music. Nothing could be further from the truth, as the frequent inclusion of extracts from absolutely modern works worthy of emulation should in itself be sufficient to prove. It is probably impossible for any composer to *begin* exactly where the composer before him left off. Sir Charles Stanford, indeed, has some very emphatic counsels to give on this point.[1] "What a century evolved in its development," he says, speaking of the study of orchestration, "each composer must evolve in miniature for himself."

Whatever we may think of this advice as applied to the subject under present discussion, we may be sure that Mozart has a great deal to teach us, especially in the field of quartet music of which he was so great a master; and we may well feel that, taken as an example side by side with the great moderns who have confessedly learnt so much from him, he may still yield us many of his secrets without hampering us or holding us back from our hot pursuit of the many modern problems before us.

Who shall dare to prophesy what the future of Chamber Music may be? Beginning with the lightest and most trivial types of dances devised for the evening amusement of over-dined monarchs and nobles, it gradually passed, thanks to the mastery and musicianship of Haydn and Mozart, into a sphere of high intellectual accomplishment and most pure beauty. Tinged in later years with more dramatic expression, and sounding the utmost depth of passion and emotion of which the great Beethoven was capable, it is now sharing in those tangles of conflicting intricacies that a strenuous and complex age is translating from its life into its art.

The period in which we live is probably one of transition, but it is a period of activity—and, as in physical life so in art, activity is a sure sign of vital existence. To return absolutely to earlier methods, ignoring the swift current of the stream of progress, is unthinkable. Even if destined to be of small

[1] *Musical Composition*, Sir Charles V. Stanford. (Macmillan & Co., and Stainer and Bell & Co.)

service in furthering the developments which crowd so quickly one upon the other, the composer must live in his own age, and learn to find for himself the beauty and the worth that survive, and then hold fast to them.

If he is left far behind, or lost in the turmoil that surrounds him, he may yet feel that he has contributed his small quota to the general movement forward, and, still undaunted, include amongst his prayers those fine words of Edmund Gosse—

> May I in patience infinite
> Attend the beauty that must be,
> And, though it slays me, welcome it.

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